NATION

Child rape cases soar by 96 pc in 6yrs: NCRB

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BUSINESS

B'luru among top 7 cities on rising demand for bigger homes

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SPORTS

Sinner, winner: Italian takes first major at AO 2024

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Section 144 in Mandya after cops remove Hanuman flag

MANDYA, 28 JAN

Keragodu village here faced tense moments on Sunday after the authorities removed a 'Hanuma dwaja', a saffron flag bearing lord Hanuman's portrait, from a 108-ft tall flag post. The incident led to a political confrontation between the government and opposition in the State.

Section 144 has been also imposed in Mandya after protests broke out after authorities removed the Hanuman's portrait. Leader of Opposition R Ashoka, Former Deputy chief minister and MLA, CN Ashwath Narayan, MLC Chalavadi Narayanaswamy and other BJP members were taken into custody during the protest in Mandya.

A large contingent of police personnel was deployed as a precautionary measure, when people from the village and its surroundings, along with members of the BJP, JD(S), and Bajrang Dal, gathered to protest against the removal of the flag. Ashoka said, "The lathi charge has been done on women. Whose permission is necessary to hoist Hanuman flag in front of Hanuman temple?"

He gave a call for statewide bands against the anti-Hindu policy. He said that Janata Dal (S) will also participate in the protests.

Hindu organisations and BJP workers are planning to protest by Padayatra till the Mandya District Commissioner's office and seizing the office on Monday. In order to quell the unrest, police resorted to a mild lathi charge. Subsequently, the police and administration replaced the Hanuma dwaja with the national tricolour on the flagpole.

Official and police sources indicated that residents of Keragodu and 12 neighbouring villages, along with certain organisations, had funded the installation of the flag post near Rangamandira. Reportedly, BJP and JD(S) workers were actively involved in this initiative.

Cops had to use force to disperse mobs **PHOTO: X/@ERBMJHA**

They raised a saffron flag featuring Hanuman's image, prompting Opposition from some individuals who filed a complaint with the administration. Acting on the complaint, the taluk panchayat executive officer directed the gram panchayat officials to remove the flag.

- A large contingent of police personnel was deployed as a precautionary measure, when people from the village and its surroundings, along with members of the BJP, JD(S), and Bajrang Dal, gathered to protest against the removal of the flag. Police had to resort to lathicharge as well

Several villagers, including a significant number of women, vehemently protested against the removal. Some activists and villagers stayed vigilant even after midnight on Saturday fearing that the flagpole would be removed.

BJP State President and MLA BY Vijayendra on Sunday said that the Congress government is drunk on power. "Chief Minister and Home Minister themselves are creating a situation that will worsen law and order in the state. I will directly talk to them. Despite taking permission, the government has used police to lower the flag," Vijayendra said.

Tension persisted on Sunday morning, leading to a heated exchange between the police and protesting villagers and activists, as the cops removed the saffron flag in the presence of senior district officials.

Some protesters directed their anger towards the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government and Mandya Congress MLA Ganiga Ravikumar, chanting slogans against them.

—Salar News with Agencies

NITISH KUMAR BACK IN NDA

Nitish ditches Mahagathbandhan and INDIA, takes oath as CM

PATNA, 28 JAN

JD(U) President Nitish Kumar on Sunday took oath as Chief Minister of Bihar for a record ninth time after a dramatic volte-face, ditching the Mahagathbandhan and the opposition bloc INDIA and forming a new government with BJP, which he had dumped less than 18 months ago.

Kumar was sworn in by Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar at Raj Bhavan in the presence of senior leaders including BJP National President JP Nadda, hours after he resigned from the post, saying "things were not working well" for him in the Grand Alliance and the opposition bloc.

The 72-year-old leader indicated that he was not feeling happy with the way things were in the Mahagathbandhan in the state as well as the INDIA bloc that he helped take shape but which failed to adequately recognise his efforts.

"You all know how I came to this alliance and also how I worked to bring together so many parties. But of late things were not working well. It was not going down well with those in my party as well", said Kumar. Congratulating Kumar and his two deputies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted that the newly sworn-in NDA government in Bihar will leave no stone unturned for the state's development and to fulfil people's aspirations.

In a post on X, Modi said he is confident that the new government in Bihar will serve the people with full dedication. Notably, no leader of RJD, the single largest party in the Assembly, was present at the ceremony.

Prasad's son Tejashwi Yadav, who was the Deputy CM until Kumar walked out of the alliance, said: "The JD(U) will be destroyed in the upcoming assembly polls. The game is not over for us. The game has just begun."

His elder brother Tej Pratap Yadav, also a former minister, and Singapore-based elder sister Rohini Acharya came out with a flurry of posts on X, lampooning the JD(U) president, whom they likened to a "chameleon". CPI(ML) Liberation, which supported the Mahagathbandhan government from the outside, launched a blistering attack on Kumar, accusing him of "betrayal".

Kumar had first taken oath as the state's Chief Minister in 2000. However, his government fell within a week. After his breakup with BJP in 2013, Kumar still survived in power as the JD(U), which was then just a few members short of the majority mark, got outside support from parties like Congress and CPI, besides a disgruntled faction of the RJD. *PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Nitish Kumar with Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar after taking oath as Bihar CM, at Raj Bhavan in Patna, Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

'Won't go anywhere else now'

JD(U) President Nitish Kumar asserted that there is now no question of him going anywhere else, leaving the NDA-fold. Kumar was sworn in by Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar at Raj Bhavan here, hours after he resigned from the post, saying "things were not working well" for him in the Grand Alliance and the Opposition bloc INDIA. "I was with them (NDA) earlier, too. We went on different paths, but now we are together and will remain so... I came back to where I was (NDA), and now there is no question of going anywhere else," he said.

SAMRAT IS BJP LEGISLATIVE PARTY LEADER

PATNA, 28 JAN

Samrat Choudhary was on Sunday elected the leader of the BJP legislative party in Bihar, while Vijay Kumar Sinha was elected its deputy leader.With these elevations, Choudhary, the state BJP President, and Sinha are likely to be made the deputy Chief Ministers in the new NDA government that will be formed in the state."BJP MLAs approved the proposal to form an NDA government in the state with JD(U)'s support," the BJP's in-charge of Bihar Vinod Tawde said after JD(U) President Nitish Kumar resigned as chief minister.

Senior BJP leader Tarkishore Prasad told PTI-Video that "most certainly" Choudhary and Sinha will be the party's choice for the post of deputy Chief Ministers. Other party leaders who are likely to be made ministers in the new government are Nitin Nabin, Shahnawaz Hussain, Rampreet Paswan, Neeraj Singh Babloo, besides Prasad, another BJP leader said. *—PTI*

75TH SC EVENT

Laws framed today will strengthen India: Modi

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said government was modernising laws keeping in view the present context and asserted that these legislations will further strengthen tomorrow's India.

Addressing the 75th anniversary celebrations of the Supreme Court here, he said that with the enactment of three new criminal justice laws, India's legal, policing and investigative systems entered a new era.

"It is important to ensure that the transition to the new laws from the ones dating back to hundreds of years is smooth. In this regard, we have already started training and capacity building work for government employees," the Prime Minister said.

Modi urged Supreme Court to come forward to work towards the capacity building of other stakeholders. "An empowered judicial system is a part of 'Viksit Bharat'. The government is working continuously and taking many decisions to form a trusted judicial system. 'The Jan Vishwas Bill' is a step in this direction. In the future, this will reduce the unnecessary burden on the judicial system," the Prime Minister said.

Narendra Modi **PHOTO: PTI**

> **It is important to ensure that the transition to the new laws from the ones dating back to hundreds of years is smooth**
>
> -Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi

He said that the law on mediation will lessen the burden on courts as the legislation will improve the alternative dispute resolution mechanism. Modi said the Supreme Court has strengthened India's vibrant democracy and given many important verdicts on individual rights and freedom of speech which have given new direction to the country's socio-political milieu.

"Today's economic policies of India will form the basis of tomorrow's bright India. The laws being made in India today will further strengthen tomorrow's bright India," Prime Minister said. "Laws made today will brighten the future of India. With changes happening globally, the world's eyes are set on India, as the world's faith is growing stronger in India. In such times, it is important for India to take advantage of every opportunity given to it," Modi said.

—PTI

It was expected, says Cong President

KALABURAGI, 28 JAN

Taking a dig at the JD(U) and its leadership for quitting the Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) in Bihar and returning to the BJP-led NDA to form a new government in that state, Congress President M Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said this was expected and there are many such people in the country who are "Aaya Ram Gaya Ram".

He said he had received information from RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav about JD(U)'s plans to walk out of Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) five days ago, and despite all efforts the Nitish Kumar-led party has left.

"Lalu Prasad Yadav (RJD leader) had hinted about this development five days ago, I had spoken to him in detail about the situation, what is the number, what is their number, and what to do. He (Yadav) told me if they (JD(U)) are going, let them go. We have been fighting, earlier also, we (Congress and JD(U) both have fought (elections) together and we will continue to fight..." Kharge said.

Averring that it was "expected" that JD(U) would go, the AICC President further said, "There were indications of it...." Kharge said. *—PTI*

REACHED SEAT SHARING UNDERSTANDING WITH INDIA ALLIANCE: CONGRESS

KALABURAGI, 28 JAN

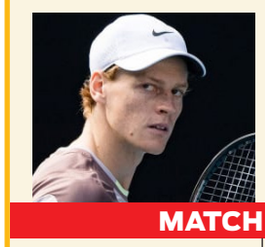
Congress President M Mallikarjun Kharge said his party has held talks with all alliance partners of INDIA bloc on seat-sharing for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, and reached an understanding with some of them, while the dialogue with others is at the final stages.

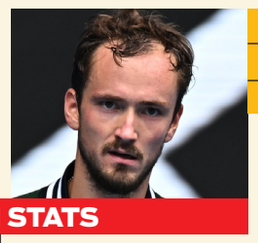
He said Congress has already begun preparation for the Lok Sabha polls with the on-going 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' led by party leader Rahul Gandhi and his own visit to various places across the country.

"Our party's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is going on. I have also visited Telangana, and will be travelling to Dehradun, Odisha, Bihar, Delhi, Kerala and other places. *—PTI*

POPE AND SINNER WIN

Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy after winning the final against Russia's Daniil Medvedev at Melbourne Park stadium in Australia on Sunday **PHOTO: X/ATP TOUR**





MATCH STATS

JANNIK SINNER		DANIILMEDVEDEV	
Aces	14	Aces	11
Double faults	5	Double faults	3
Win % on 2nd serve	59%	Win % on 2nd serve	49%
Break points	4/9	Break points	4/12
Points won	142	Points won	141

SCORE BOARD

Jannik Sinner	3	3	6	6	6
DaniilMedvedev	6	6	4	4	3

Sinner rallies from 2 sets down to win AO

MELBOURNE, 28 JAN

Jannik Sinner found a way to turn defense into attack in his first major final and take the Australian Open title from Daniil Medvedev 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 on Sunday. It was his third straight win over a top 5 player. *—AP*

Will share details of Rahul's 'body double': Himanta

GUWAHATI, 28 JAN

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said he will soon share the name and address of the "body double" purportedly used by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in the state. Sarma had brought up the allegation of the Congress MP using a "body double" during the Yatra at a press conference on Thursday, during which he quoted a news report claiming that the person sitting and waving at people from the Yatra bus was "probably not Rahul Gandhi at all". "I don't just say things. The duplicate's name, and how it was done -- I will share all details. Just wait for a few days," the Chief Minister said on Saturday. *—PTI*

UGC GUIDELINES

'No reserved posts can be de-reserved'

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

The Ministry of Education (MoE) on Sunday clarified that no reserved posts can be de-reserved after draft guidelines by the University Grants Commission (UGC) proposed that any vacancy reserved for SC, ST and OBC candidates can be declared unreserved if enough candidates from these categories are not available

The 'Guidelines for Implementation of the Reservation Policy of the Government of India in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)' are in the public domain for feedback from stakeholders. The draft guidelines have drawn flak from several quarters. The Congress alleged there is a "conspiracy" to end reservation given to SCs, STs and OBCs in posts in higher education institutions and that the Modi government is only doing "politics of symbolism" on the issues of Dalits, backward classes and tribals.

The JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) has announced a protest against UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar on the issue on Monday. Kumar also clarified that there has been no de-reservation of reserved category positions in Central Educational Institutions in the past and there is going to be no such de-reservation.

"Reservation in Central Educational Institutions is provided for all posts in direct recruitment in Teacher's cadre as per the Central Educational Institutions Act, 2019. "After enactment of this Act, no reserved post is to be de-reserved. Ministry of Education has given directives to all the CEIs to fill up the vacancies strictly as per the 2019 ACT," the Ministry of Education wrote on X. *—PTI*

Congress alleged there is a "conspiracy" to end reservation given to SCs, STs and OBCs **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: SALAR

Former JDS MLA dies at 79

BENGALURU/ YADGIR, 28 JAN

Former Janata Dal (S) MLA Naganagouda Kandakur, 79, passed away on Sunday due to a heart attack. He was admitted to a private hospital on Sunday morning after he complained of chest pain and suffered an attack at 11 am.The deceased Kandakur contested from Gurmitkal constituency of Yadgir district in 2018 and won. By winning Gurmitkal Kandkur brought an end to the rule of Congress that was in power from 1967 and also became the first non-Congress MLA, after 51 years in the region. The body of Kandakur was brought home and JDS workers to pay their final tribute.JDS Supremo HD Deve Gowda on X expressed his condolences, "I am deeply shocked by the passing away of Shri Nagangouda Kandakur, former MLA and senior leader of JDS party. He was personally very close to me."—*Salar News*

Loan app agents harass man, morph pictures

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

A college lecturer in Bengaluru was harassed for nearly three months after he availed of a loan through two instant loan apps.Karunakar Prasad (name changed) was abused and threatened and his morphed explicit photographs were sent to pressure him into paying exorbitant sums.Due to personal needs, Prasad needed money and downloaded Digital Bank and Money Pocket in October 2023. He initially borrowed Rs 50,000, which quickly ballooned to Rs 56,550 with exorbitant interest rates and hidden charges. The problems began with harassing calls daily demanding immediate repayment with threats of public humiliation. Fearing the morphed images and videos, Prasad was forced to borrow from friends and acquaintances to pay the loan agents a staggering Rs 5.69 lakh - over ten times the initial loan amount. —*Salar News*

Man killed as fight breaks out in bar

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

A young man was murdered by his friends during the early hours of Sunday in a bar in Subramanyapura. The deceased Darshan and the accused Chandrasekhar alias Pritam, Yashwanth, Prashant and Lankesh were friends. Darshan came to the bar with a few other friends where he met the accused. A small fight started between one of the accused and one of the friends from Darshan's group. When Darshan tried to stop the fight, Chandrasekhar hit him with a hollow brick. Due to the weight of the hollow brick, Darshan died on the spot. The accused was later arrested. A case has been registered at Subramanyapura police station. —*Salar News*

Vijayapura-B'luru to get luxury sleeper buses

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Kalyan Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) has launched a new luxury sleeper bus service for the first time on the Vijayapura-Bengaluru route.Departing at 9.45 pm from Vijayapura, the bus is scheduled to arrive in Bengaluru at 6.45 am. Likewise, the Bangalore-Vijayapura bus departs at 10 pm from Bengaluru and reaches Vijayapura at 7 in the morning. Tickets for these buses can be conveniently booked through the KSRTC website.The fare for this luxury service is Rs 1,417. —*Salar News*

Cong expects to win 15-20 seats in State in LS polls: CM

BJP swept 2019 Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka by winning 25 seats

CHITRADURGA, 28 JAN

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said the Congress expects to win between 15 and 20 seats in the State, in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Karnataka has 28 Lok Sabha seats.

"Congress will win around 20 seats in the coming Lok Sabha elections. We don't lie like the BJP, claiming to win all 28 seats in the state. Our expectation is that we may win between 15 and 20 seats," Siddaramaiah said while speaking to reporters here.

BJP swept the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka by winning 25 seats, while an independent (Sumalatha Ambareesh from Mandya) backed by it won one seat. The Congress and JD(S) won one seat each.

Congress and JD(S) were in alliance during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, while this time around the regional party has partnered with the BJP to face the upcoming elections.

Noting that when he was chief minister earlier, the Socio-Economic and Education Survey report, popularly known as the "caste census", was not ready, Siddaramaiah, in response to a question, said, then the coalition government that came to power with HD Kumaraswamy as the chief minister did not accept the report. Also, the BJP that came to power thereafter too did not accept it. "Now if the report is submitted, we will take it."

The then Siddaramaiah-led Congress government (2013-2018) 2015 commissioned the Social-Economic and Educational survey, at an estimated cost of Rs 170 crore in the state, the findings of which have not been made public yet.

The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes under its then chairperson H Kantharaju was tasked with preparing a caste census report.

The survey work was completed in 2018, towards the end of Siddaramaiah's first tenure as chief minister, but was not accepted or made public.Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes under its current Chairman K Jayaprakash Hegde, which has the caste census findings, has been given time till 31 January to submit the report to the government. Karnataka's two dominant communities -- Vokkaliags and Lingayats -- have expressed reservations about the survey, calling it unscientific, and have demanded that it be rejected and a fresh survey be conducted.

—*PTI*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said Congress doesn't lie like the BJP, claiming to win all seats

PHOTO: PTI

Reject the anti-constitutional BJP and RSS, says CM

Bengaluru, 28 Jan

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday asked people to reject the BJP and RSS and said if we protect the Constitution, the Constitution will protect us. "Reject the anti-constitutional BJP-RSS which is trying to divide the society in the name of caste," he said. Speaking at the inauguration of the awareness programme for the exploited communities in the State, Siddaramaiah said, "The people of backward classes Dalits and others should understand who their real enemies are and reject their ideologies."BJP and RSS continue to oppose the Mandal report just like how they have opposed social justice and equality, said Siddaramaiah. "Dr BR Ambedkar had warned that the power should not go into the hands of the opponents of the Constitution, reservation and social justice. We should not forget the warning," he said. DK Shivakumar also said State government is committed to caste census. "Rahul Gandhi is fighting for justice for all sections of the society. The goal is to empower the oppressed class under the leadership of Mallikarjun Kharge," he said. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Top brass to decide boards, corps' tenure: DKS

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar announced that the tenure for Boards and Corporation positions has been reduced to two years by the High Command.

Speaking to the reporters on Sunday he said, "This change was implemented to ensure that more party workers are recognised and rewarded for their hard work." He clarified that the decision was not taken by the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

On Saturday Union Minister Bhupender Yadav said that Karnataka BJP is set to win all 28 seats for the Lok Sabha in the upcoming polls. Reacting to this Shivakumar said, "BJP was saying that they will win all the 224 seats in Karnataka Assembly elections too, and we all know what happened. We had said we would win 136-140 seats, and we won those many seats. Let them say whatever estimation they want to."When he was asked about the decision of Nitish Kumar's exit from the INDIA bloc and switched back to the BJP's fold to remain in power for the ninth term Shivakumar said, "The party would wait and watch the developments." —*Salar News*

LIFE SNUFFED OUT

Newborn girl eaten by animals in City, dies

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

A newborn girl found abandoned in the alleys between the two buildings of Rajanna Layout in Jayanagar died on Saturdayearly morning. The baby was found by the residents on Thursdaynight. It was attacked by cats and rats before being rescued by a resident.

The infant was immediately taken to Indira Gandhi Hospital for medical care.Tilak Nagar police officer told Salar News, "The baby was left unattended for two days, and the residents ignored the baby's cries, thinking it was a cat. Later, one of the residents found the baby lying in the alley."

The distressing news of the abandoned baby has circulated widely on social media, prompting calls for action against the parents who abandoned the baby. Social activist, Member of Parliament, and former chairperson of the Delhi Commission for Women, Swati Maliwal, wrote a letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to take swift action in this case.

Taking it to social media, Swati Maliwal said, "A heart-wrenching video of a 'one-day-old' girl being thrown from a building and murdered in Bengaluru has gone viral. The girl has died in the hospital. A letter has been written to @siddaramaiah ji that an FIR should be lodged immediately and strict action should be taken against the criminals." Police are yet to trace the parents.

—*Salar News*

BBMP truck kills teen girl in City

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

A 15-year-old girl, Aafiya Mehtab died after a BBMP garbage truck ran over her on Sunday. The incident took place at 6.45am, on Mosque Road, Pulikeshi Nagar.

Mehtab, the daughter of a bookstall owner was learning to ride a two-wheeler when a garbage truck hit her from behind making her lose balance. She fell as the truck ran over her head leading to her death on the spot. Her body was taken to Bowring Hospital for autopsy. The truck was seized by the police but the accused, the truck driver Nagaraju is yet to be nabbed. Mehtab's maternal uncle Mohammad Yasin Pasha, told **Salar news** "Doctors told us that her head was crushed into pieces and the driver did not stop. Her father is hospitalised after receiving the news. I want my girl to get justice."

Zohaib Khan, a member of the Islamic Information Centre an NGO, told **Salar News**, "It is a very narrow road for heavy vehicles. BBMP should take strict action against the driver. We have all the video proofs needed against the driver." He alleged that there had been no action against the driver yet.

—*Salar News*

POLICE EXAMS

Bags lined up outside an exam centre as aspirants write for police posts at RC College in Bengaluru on Sunday. There was tight security at the centre to prevent malpractices

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Ayodhya debate emerges in Koppal district

KOPPAL, 28 JAN

As the installation of Lord Rama idol in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, unfolds on the 22 January, a unique debate has surfaced in Gangavati taluk, Koppal district, surrounding the town of Ayodhya in its boundaries.Gangavati taluk boasts several towns linked to the Ramayana period, such as Anjanadri and Pampasarovar, the birthplace of Hanuman. Intriguingly, Ayodhya is also a part of this taluk. In recent years, the town has been divided into new and old Ayodhya. Notably, an ancient Ram Mandir graces the landscape, featuring idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, and Sugriva.Additionally, the village houses temples dedicated to Pampapati, Eshwara, Bhimakonda, Anjaneya, andGangamata, reminiscent of the temples in Hampi.

—*Salar News*

Director Manjunath Mansore accused of domestic abuse

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

A complaint has been filed against acclaimed sandalwood filmmaker Manjunath Mansore by his wife, Akhila, alleging mental and physical abuse, dowry harassment, and threats on her life. She also filed the complaint against Mansore's mother, Venkatalakshmamma, and his sister, Hemalatha at Subramanyapura Police Station.Akhila claims that Mansore harassed her for a long since the early days of their marriage. She claimed that he threatened her family to provide Rs 10 lakh for a film project during the pandemic. Additionally, he, along with his mother and sister, demanded an SUV. She was asked not to disclose this to anyone.In response, Mansore wrote a Letter to the Assistant Commissioner of Police where he says that his wife suffers from mental health disease and was under treatment. He denied receiving dowry and asked to investigate his transactions. —*Salar News*

Dandeli, situated along the Kali River, witnessed a boost in tourism, prompting the introduction of train services up to Ambewadi in 2019

PHOTO: PTI

Dandeli residents urge for resumption of train services

KARWAR, 28 JAN

Despite the resumption of normal life post-Covid-19, residents of Dandeli in Uttara Kannada district are grappling with the absence of daily train services that were suspended during the pandemic.

Four years ago, railway connectivity was established to Dandeli, contributing to the region's tourism growth.

However, the daily train services were halted during the lockdown, and locals are now urging authorities to reinstate these essential transportation links.

Dandeli, situated along the Kali River, witnessed a boost in tourism, prompting the introduction of train services up to Ambewadi in 2019.

This initiative aimed to facilitate tourists arriving in Dandeli from the Dharwad route . The railway line from Alnavar to Ambewadi was inaugurated by Union Minister Prahlad Joshi and Suresh Angadi.

Unfortunately, the services ceased after just two months and have not resumed since.

Resident Akram Khan voiced the community's concerns, stating, "Train service should be restarted till Dharwad and the Bengaluru train should be extended till Dandeli."

—*Salar News*

SAVING FOURTH ESTATE

Gauri Day: Scribes advocate for truthful journalism

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

The City saw many journalists come together to remember slain scribe Gauri Lankesh on her 62nd birth anniversary on Sunday. Gauri was a Bengaluru-based activist and editor of Lankesh Patrike. She was shot dead outside her home on 5 September, 2017.

The event was called "Gauri Day 62nd birth anniversary: Re-Constructing the Fourth Estate", where Bhanwar Meghwanshi, a social activist and journalist focusing on Dalit movement, stressed the importance of preserving Gauri's legacy for the welfare of India's Fourth Estate. The event was organised by the Gauri Memorial Trust at the Indian Social Institute.

Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, a senior independent journalist, criticised the growing bias in the media and emphasized the importance of journalists framing questions independently. Thakurta urged journalists to adopt Gauri's positive journalism approach and uphold journalistic integrity.

"Gauri's legacy will remain alive as long as journalism presents the truth to the people. It is the responsibility of the media to always present a two-sided story and not focus solely on one-sided elements. Gauri, a prominent journalist, serves as a role model for this," he said.

Meena Kotwal, Editor of Mooknayaka, echoed similar sentiments, stating that journalists should not succumb to political influence. Kotwal highlighted Gauri's dedication to truth and her impact on journalism, urging journalists to avoid political puppetry and prioritise factual reporting.Journalist Sumit Chauhan emphasized the resilience required by journalists and advocated for journalism to be people-friendly and free from hatred or anti-national sentiments. The event was also attended by senior journalists including Navin Kumar, Editor of The Caravan, and Zubair from Alt News factchecking portal.

—*Salar News*

Gauri's legacy will remain alive as long as journalism presents the truth to the people

PHOTO: X

AAP launches grassroots tour across Karnataka

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) State President Mukhyamantri Chandru, focused on establishing the party as a viable alternative in the State, has embarked on a tour of three districts in Kalyan Karnataka.

Starting on 29 January, Chandru will visit Bidar, Kalaburagi, and Yadgir districts, participating in programmes and meeting local leaders to strengthen party organisation.

On 29 January, Chandru's itinerary includes a visit to Bidar district, attending a press conference at 11 am, followed by meetings with leaders at 12.30 pm, and office bearers of the party at 3 pm. Later in the afternoon, he will participate in a conversation at Mangalagiri village at 4.30 pm before departing for Kalaburagi at 8 pm.

On 30 January, Chandru will address a press conference in Kalaburagi at 11 am, followed by a constituency meeting of MLC graduates from 12 pm to 2 pm, where discussions with candidate Pratap Reddy and seven district presidents will take place. Meetings with leaders will follow at 3 pm, and a discussion session at Vivekananda Nagar in Kalaburagi is scheduled for 4.30 pm.

On 31 January, Chandru will visit Yadgir district, commencing with a visit to Madanpur at 9 am. A press conference is scheduled for 11 am, followed by discussions with party office bearers at 12 noon. The day will conclude with a dialogue program at the CPS school ground in Shahpur at 4 pm. —*Salar News*

Modi likely to visit Odisha twice in Feb

BHUBANESWAR, 28 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Odisha twice in February, state BJP President Manmohan Samal said on Sunday. Modi, who is scheduled to visit Odisha's Sambalpur on 3 February and address a public meeting, may also visit the state capital on 10 February when the saffron party holds its national women's conference here, Samal said. "The party has decided to hold two women's conferences, one in Madhya Pradesh and the second in Odisha in February. The prime minister is likely to attend the women's conference in Odisha tentatively on 10 February. Modi has given consent to attend it", Samal said, adding that the details of the programme will be announced soon. He said around 25,000 women from 14 states are likely to attend the Mahila Samavesh, which is seen as an attempt to make a dent into the trusted women vote bank of Biju Janata Dal. *—PTI*

Groups agree to install statues of Patel, Ambedkar

UJJAIN, 28 JAN

Days after the removal of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's statue from a town in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain district ostensibly to make way for B R Ambedkar's triggered a clash, two groups have mutually agreed to install the statues of both leaders at the same spot. Members of two communities clashed and hurled stones at each other after statue of Vallabhbhai Patel was pulled down by unidentified people in Makdone tehsil on Thursday morning, according to police. Meeting of members of both communities was organised in Ujjain on Sunday in the presence of district collector Neeraj Kumar Singh and Superintendent of Police Sachin Sharma, an official release said. Members decided that statues of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Ambedkar would be installed at Makdone bus stand, said the release.He told representatives of both communities those responsible for creating disharmony will face action, it said. *—PTI*

After fresh ED summons, J'khand CM visits Delhi

RANCHI, 28 JAN

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren went on an unplanned visit to Delhi after the Enforcement Directorate issued him a fresh summons, asking him to join the investigation in a money laundering case. Soren travelled to the national capital on Saturday night, triggering speculations. His trip to Delhi came in the backdrop of the ED asking him whether he would be available for questioning on either 29 or 31 January. A source said that Soren went to Delhi for legal consultations. However, this could not be corroborated from the Chief Minister's Office. ED had recorded the chief minister's statement on 20 January at his official residence under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The investigation pertains to a "huge racket of illegal change of ownership of land by the mafia" in Jharkhand, according to the agency. *—PTI*

Others should follow Akhilesh's alliance model: SP

LUCKNOW, 28 JAN

Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav has presented an alliance model to counter the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections and others should follow, a spokesperson of his party said on Sunday after JD(U) President Nitish Kumar resigned as the chief minister of Bihar. Kumar, who is likely to form a new government in Bihar with the BJP's support, told reporters in Patna that "things were not working well" for him in the Mahagathbandhan he had joined less than 18 months ago and the opposition bloc INDIA. *—PTI*

NITISH KUMAR, THE 'PALTU RAM' FROM PATNA

The veteran leader is known for never being at peace with his allies

PATNA, 28 JAN

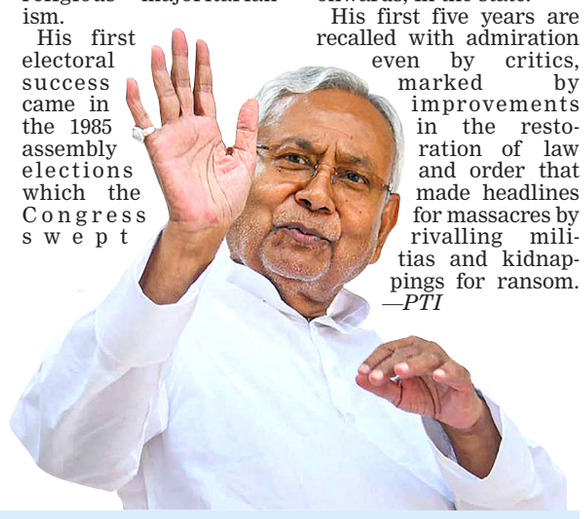
Janata Dal (United) President Nitish Kumar has distinguished himself as a leader who ruled Bihar for the longest time, without his party having ever won a majority on its own.

Concealed beneath the feat, which testifies to his political acumen and survival instincts, is the fact that the 72-year-old leader could never remain at peace with his allies which also made him change partners frequently.

"The name of Nitish Kumar deserves to enter the Guinness Book of Records for the number of times he has aligned, dumped and realigned with the BJP", was a tongue-in-cheek remark by Congress MLA from Bhagalpur Ajeet Sharma.

Sharma also cited Kumar's famous remark "mitti mein mil jaayenge magar BJP ke saath nahin jaaenge" (I shall be consigned to dust rather than going back to the BJP), soon after he had first snapped ties with the saffron party in 2013, following his objections to the national ascendance of Narendra Modi, his then Gujarat counterpart.

No wonder, in a political career spanning four decades, the accusation of "opportunism" and names like 'Paltu Ram' has stuck out like a sore thumb, even though there has been no dearth of admirers who remember him for keeping at bay taints of corruption, nepotism and misgovernance, and also never giving in to religious majoritarianism.



His first electoral success came in the 1985 assembly elections which the Congress swept though he managed to win the Harnaut seat for Lok Dal.Five years later, he moved to Delhi as an MP from the now-abolished seat of Barh.

After another half a decade, when the Mandal wave was at its peak and Prasad was reaping its dividends, Kumar sided with George Fernandes to float the Samata Party, which later morphed into the JD(U)) and share power with the BJP at the Centre and, from 2005 onwards, in the state.

His first five years are recalled with admiration even by critics, marked by improvements in the restoration of law and order that made headlines for massacres by rivalling militias and kidnappings for ransom. *—PTI*

JD(U)-BJP alliance will not last till next Assembly polls: Prashant Kishor

PATNA, 28 JAN

President Nitish Kumar's newly-formed alliance with BJP would unravel before the 2025 assembly polls in Bihar, political strategist turned activist Prashant Kishor claimed on Sunday. Kishor also claimed that the BJP could end up paying a "huge price" for realigning with Kumar, after declaring that its doors were shut for the leader by whom it was ditched less than 18 months ago. *—PTI*

Word of the day! Definition of 'snollygoster' US dialect: a shrewd, unprincipled politician. First Known Use: 1845. Most recent use: 26/7/17

-Shashi Tharoor, Congress Leader

Chameleon is infamous for changing their skin ...Paltis Kumar should also be honoured with Chameleon Ratna award for frequently changing his political loyalty... for his speed of colour change

-Tej Pratap Yadav, RJD leader

Garbage goes back into the dustbin. Happy stinking garbage to the group

-Rohini Acharya, Ex-CM Lalu Prasad Yadav's daughter

Ayodhya, Bihar. Talk of: Ram Rajya at Ayodhya and showcase 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram in Bihar'! What say you Modi ji?

-Kapil Sibal, Rajya Sabha member

Nitish's exit a gain for INDIA bloc: DMK

CHENNAI, 28 JAN

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's exit from the Mahagathbandhan alliance and consequently the INDIA bloc to align with the BJP is a "loss" for the Saffron party and a "gain" for the opposition alliance, Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK said on Sunday.Reacting to Janata Dal (United) President and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's move, which is being seen as a body blow to the INDIA alliance, DMK spokesperson J Constandine Ravindran said, "People will never accept this act of betrayal."He said "Though Kumar is a veteran leader in Bihar, he has completely lost credibility. He has no integrity. Integrity and credibility are very important for a leader." *—PTI*

NYAY YATRA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, in Siliguri, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Hatred, being spread across country: RaGa

SILIGURI, 28 JAN

- He said government has made a mockery of youths who wanted to join the armed forces by introducing the Agniveer a short-term recruitment scheme for the armed forces

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday accused the BJP government at the Centre of spreading hatred and violence across the country and working for big corporations by overlooking the interests of the poor and the youth. Gandhi, who was addressing the "Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra" in Siliguri in North Bengal, said, "The Union government has made a mockery of the youths who wanted to join the armed forces by introducing the Agniveer scheme, a short-term recruitment scheme for the armed forces." "Hatred and violence are being spread across the country. It will serve no purpose. Instead of spreading hatred, we have to work towards spreading love and justice for our youths. The Union government is working only for big corporations and not for the poor and the youth," he said.

Expressing gratitude for the reception he has received in West Bengal, Gandhi said, "Bengal holds a special place. It had led the ideological fight during the Independence struggle. It is the duty of the Bengal and the Bengalis to show the way to fight against hatred and bind the nation together in present circumstances."

"If you don't rise to the occasion, people will never forgive you," he said. *—PTI*

Now, AAP will contest all Assembly seats in H'yana

CHANDIGARH, 28 JAN

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal *PHOTO: PTI*

- Kejriwal said Haryana is looking for a "big change" as the people of the state are "fed up" with all the parties that have ruled here

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said his party will contest all the 90 assembly seats in Haryana on its own, but the Lok Sabha polls will be fought as part of the INDIA bloc.

The Lok Sabha polls are due in April-May while the assembly elections are due in October. "Today people only have trust in one party, which is the Aam Aadmi Party. On one side, they see Punjab, and on the other, our government in Delhi. Today Haryana is seeking a big change. In Delhi and Punjab, people made this big change earlier and now people there are happy," he said at his party's 'Badlaav Jansabha' in Haryana's Jind.

AAP will contest all the 90 assembly seats in Haryana on its own, but the Lok Sabha polls will be fought as part of the INDIA bloc, Kejriwal said. "AAP will contest on all 90 seats and we will form the next government in Haryana and make it number 1 state in the country," he said. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was also present at the event.

Kejriwal said Haryana is looking for a "big change" as the people of the state are "fed up" with all the parties that have ruled here. They have tested all the other parties and these parties have only filled their own coffers, the AAP national convener alleged.Only AAP can provide round-the-clock power supply and other facilities to people like it has done in Delhi and Punjab, he said. *—PTI*

CPI(M) in Kerala hits out at Guv over wayside sit-in

T'PURAM, 28 JAN

CPI (M) in Kerala on Sunday accused Governor Arif Mohammed Khan of acting with an agenda and support of the BJP-ruled Centre, a day after his dramatic wayside sit-in against the SFI's black flag protest.

Despite the deployment of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel for Governor's security by the central government, protests would continue against him in the southern state, the Left party said. Addressing reporters here, party state secretary MV Govindan said Kerala is a state where people indulge in political activities with honesty and sincerity and they won't tolerate such acts.

The intention of Khan was to orchestrate a scenario, wherein he would be attacked, thereby compelling the Centre to initiate action against the state, he alleged. *— PTI*

DIAMOND JUBILEE

Chief Justice of India Justice DY Chandrachud and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 75th year celebrations of the Supreme Court of India, in New Delhi, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

CJI bats for independent judiciary

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

- CJI said that "the Constitution entrenches several institutional safeguards for an independent judiciary such as a fixed retirement age and a bar against the alteration of salary of judges after their appointment"

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Sunday said an independent judiciary does not merely mean its insulation from the executive and the legislature but also the independence of individual judges in performing their duties.

He was speaking while heading a ceremonial bench at the Supreme Court to commemorate the court's 75 years. The bench comprised judges of the court and those who attended its proceedings included lawyers and former apex court judges.

The Chief Justice of India (CJI) said that "the Constitution entrenches several institutional safeguards for an independent judiciary such as a fixed retirement age and a bar against the alteration of salary of judges after their appointment".

"However, these constitutional safeguards are not in themselves sufficient to ensure an independent judiciary. An independent judiciary does not merely mean the insulation of the institution from the executive and the legislature but also the independence of individual judges in the performance of their roles as judges," he said.

The art of judging must be free of social and political pressure, and from the inherent biases which human beings hold, CJI Chandrachud said. "Efforts are being made from within the institution to educate and sensitise judges across courts to unlearn their subconscious attitudes inculcated by social conditioning on gender, disability, race, caste and sexuality," he said.CJI said that despite changes in the world, the principles highlighted during the inaugural sitting of this court on 28 January, 1950, continue to remain relevant today to the functioning of an independent Supreme Court.

"This court has in the last 75 years faced old and new challenges in confronting the face of injustice and meeting the expectations of those at the receiving end of power," he said. *—PTI*

Illegal assets of govt servants to be razed in R'than

KOTA, 28 JAN

Rajasthan Education and Panchayati Raj Minister Madan Dilawar on Sunday issued a stern warning to "corrupt" government servants, saying that illegal properties of "accused staffers" would be razed by bulldozers.

Dilawar said that the government servants who were accused of amassing huge illegal properties would be suspended and dismissed.

H said the officials present in the meeting have been directed to identify government employees against whom cases of corruption and misconduct have been lodged but have escaped action so far due to absence of adequate evidence. *—PTI*

SPREADING MISINFORMATIONS

'Govt, high-profile social media accounts increasingly compromised'

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Recent trends show an increase in incidents where scammers attack and fraudulently take over social media accounts of high-profile people and government organisations to perpetrate misinformation campaigns and scams, India's federal cyber security agency said in a latest advisory.

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) said the security of such accounts was paramount to protect reputations as it also suggested some measures to check "compromise" of social media accounts, including usage of multi-factor authentication tools.

"In today's inter-connected world, social media plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and disseminating information. These platforms have become essential for individuals, governments and enterprises alike, offering a powerful medium for communication and engagement.

"However, the widespread influence of social media also carries significant security risks. The security of social media accounts is paramount to prevent misuse, protect reputations and ensure the dissemination of authentic information," the advisory, accessed by PTI, said.

CERT-In is the national technology arm to combat cyber-attacks and guard the Indian internet space.

"Recent trends have shown an increase in incidents where scammers and threat actors take over social media accounts of high-profile personalities, official government accounts and enterprise accounts," it said.

These compromised accounts are often used for misinformation campaigns, scams and other malicious activities leading to reputation damage, CERT-In said.Cyber-attack on the servers of AIIMS, country's premier medical institution in Delhi, in 2022; hacking the official X handle of the NDRF, and similar unsuccessful attempts foiled by Indian agencies to attack the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) servers in 2022 and the G-20 website in 2023 are some of the recent cases in example. *—PTI*

CERT-In suggested measures to check compromise of accounts, including usage of multi-factor authentication tools *PHOTO: PTI*

Child rape cases soar by 96 pc in 6yrs: NCRB

Public awareness has led to a higher number of reported cases

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Child rape cases, encompassing all forms of penetrative assaults, has registered a rise of 96 per cent from 2016 to 2022, according to an analysis of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data by child rights NGO CRY.

Discussing the potential reasons behind this surge, Subhendu Bhattacharjee, the director of research and knowledge exchange at Child Rights and You (CRY), said the improved public awareness has led to a higher number of reported cases of sexual offenses against children.

He said enhanced trust in reporting mechanisms, coupled with increased accessibility through dedicated helplines, online portals, and specialised agencies, has encouraged victims and their families to step forward and report such cases.

The analysis conducted by CRY revealed a consistent upward trajectory in these rapes since 2016, with the exception of 2020. Between 2021 and 2022 alone, there was a 6.9 per cent increase in such cases.In a detailed examination encompassing all forms of penetrative assaults, including those covered by the Indian Penal Code and special and local laws, the overall increase stands at 96.8 per cent from 2016 to 2022, according to the analysis.

In 2022 alone, 38,911 cases of child rape and penetrative assaults were reported, marking a significant increase from 36,381 cases in 2021.The numbers for 2020 were 30,705, and for 2019, 31,132. In 2018, 30,917 cases were registered, while 27,616 cases were reported in 2017. The year 2016 saw 19,765 recorded cases, according to NCRB data.Bhattacharjee attributed the positive trend in reporting to recent legal reforms and policy changes aimed at strengthening laws against sexual offenses targeting children.He emphasised the role played by extensive media coverage of high-profile cases and the active involvement of communities and organisations in a supportive environment. *—PTI*

India records 182 new Covid-19 cases

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

India saw a single day rise of 182 new cases of Covid-19, while the number of active cases of the infection has declined to 1,525, the health ministry said on Sunday. One death has been reported from Kerala in a span of 24 hours, according to the ministry's data updated at 8am.The number of daily cases had dropped to double-digits till 5 December, but cases began to increase after emergence of a new variant and cold weather conditions.After 5 December, a maximum of a single-day rise of 841 new cases were reported on 31December, which is 0.2 per cent of the peak cases reported in May 2021, official sources said. Of the total active cases, around 92 per cent are recovering under home isolation. "The currently available data suggests that the JN.1 variant is neither leading to an exponential rise in the new cases nor a surge in the hospitalisation and mortality," the official source stated. *—PTI*

Parents, teen found hanging at home in MP

GWALIOR, 28 JAN

A couple and their 17-year-old son were found hanging at their home in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district on Sunday, police said. A suicide note purportedly written by the boy was also found in which he mentioned that he was taking the extreme step as he was disturbed due to a person, an official said. The three people - Jitendra Jha,50, his wife Triveni Jha,40 and their son Achal Jha,17, - lived in Hurawali Colony under Sirol police station area, Gwalior's Senior Superintendent of Police Rajesh Singh Chandel said.When their neighbours didn't see the family since Saturday evening, they informed the police, he said.The bodies of the three people were found hanging when the police broke into the house, the official said.The official said it is suspected that first Achal committed suicide by hanging himself and later his parents, upset over it, took the extreme step. *—PTI*

Four Nepalese killed in road accident in Sonipat

CHANDIGARH, 28 JAN

Four people from Nepal riding bicycles and a scooter died after being hit by a car in Haryana's Sonipat, police said on Sunday. The accident occurred past midnight at Mama-Bhanja Chowk in Sonipat, Civil Lines Police Station SHO Inspector Ravinder Kumar said.A case has been registered on the complaint of one of the injured, who was riding a bicycle, he said."The car hit four cyclists and a scooterist and they were flung in the air. All four who died in the incident hailed from Nepal. All five worked at a banquet hall in Sonipat and were returning home in Sonipat past midnight," said Kumar. According to the SHO, the car was apparently speeding when the incident happened.The driver of the car and two others with him were also injured in the incident, he said. *—PTI*

R'than gets slight relief from cold, Alwar coldest

JAIPUR, 28 JAN

There is some respite from cold conditions in Rajasthan where Alwar was recorded the coldest area in the state with a minimum temperature of 5.2 degree Celsius on Sunday.A MeT department spokesperson said that weather remained dry in the state.Jaipur recorded a low of 12.5 degrees on Sunday.Sangaria in Hanumangarh recorded 6.2 degrees Celsius followed by 6.6 degrees Celsius in Sirohi, 7.4 degrees Celsius in Bhilwara, 7.8 degrees Celsius each in Chittorgarh and Jalore.Sriganganagar recorded a low of 8 degrees Celsius, Anta 8.1 degrees Celsius, it was 8.2 degrees Celsius in Dabok, 8.3 degrees Celsius in Karauli and 8.4 degrees Celsius in Vanasthali. *—PTI*

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan trolled for assaulting 'protege' in video

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan found himself at the centre of a controversy after a video of him allegedly slapping a person went viral on social media on Saturday, following which the renowned Pakistani singer said it was an attempt to tarnish his image.

In the purported video, Khan can be seen repeatedly hitting and slapping the man, whom he later identified as his protege Naveed Hasnain, with a slipper asking "Where is my bottle?" Khan's name started trending on X hours after the 1.03-minute clip went viral, with many users calling out the singer for his misbehaviour. It couldn't be ascertained when and where the said video was filmed.The singer, known for hit Hindi movie songs such as "Mann ki Lagan" and "Jiya Dhadak Dhadak", later shared a series of videos on Instagram as a clarification.Khan, 49, termed the viral video an "internal matter" between a master and his disciple."Whatever you have seen in these videos is about an internal matter between an ustaad (master) and a shagird (protege). When a protege does a good job, we shower a lot of them and when they make a mistake, we punish them as well... I had apologised to him at the same time..." the singer said in the video, which also featured Hasnain and his father.In a separate video, Khan said the person who shot the video was trying to tarnish his image. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB/X

GULMARG COVERED IN SNOW

Tourists amid light snowfall at ski resort Gulmarg, in Baramulla district, on Sunday. Gulmarg received a fresh snowfall breaking a two-month-long dry spell —PTI PHOTO

SARPANCH NOT ALLOWED TO UNFURL FLAG OVER CASTE

BHOPAL, 28 JAN

The authorities have terminated the service of a panchayat department employee after a sarpanch was not allowed to unfurl the national flag at a village in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district on Republic Day due to his caste.

The alleged incident took place in Tarena village panchayat under Biaora tehsil of Rajgarh district on Friday, following which Congress Rajya Sabha member Digvijaya Singh alleged the sarpanch faced discrimination for being a Dalit.District Panchayat's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Akshay Temrawal on Saturday night said Tarena gram panchayat's employment assistant Lakhan Singh Sondhiya got the flag unfurled by another person, instead of the village sarpanch, on Republic Day.The matter pertaining to depriving the sarpanch of his rights has come to light, he said.The service of employment assistant Sondhiya has been terminated with immediate effect, Temrawal said.After the incident, sarpanch Man Singh Verma had alleged that employment assistant Lakhan Singh got the national flag unfurled by another person during an event in their village on January 26."It happened because I am a Verma," he claimed.The sarpanch subsequently complained to Biaora Janpad Panchayat's CEO Ishwar Verma. Congress leader Digvijaya Singh had demanded action against the employee who unfurled the flag in place of the sarpanch, and asked if it was a crime to be from the Scheduled Caste. *—PTI*

KHALISTAN ROW

Though PM and his Canadian counterpart Justin Trudeau showed strong bond, it all went for a toss when Canada accused India of killing Hardeep Singh Nijjar a Sikh separatist leader PHOTO: MEAINIA/X

India helping with Nijjar killing probe: Ex NSA

OTTAWA, 28 JAN

India is now cooperating with Canada in the on-going probe into the murder of a Sikh separatist leader in British Columbia and bilateral ties are improving following months of tensions over the matter, a former Canadian national security advisor has said, describing the changing relationship as an "evolution."

The remarks by Canada's former national security advisor Jody Thomas came during an interview with CTV on Friday.

She said India is now cooperating in the on-going probe into the killing of Khalistani separatist and designated terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar's murder in June last year in the Canadian city of Surrey.

This is the first time a Canadian official has acknowledged that India has moved things forward following allegations of non-cooperation against India by Canada amid tensions over Nijjar's killing.

The relations between the two countries saw some bitterness last year following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegation about India's suspected involvement in the killing.

India denied the allegation as "absurd and motivated."

There was no official response from the Indian government to the remarks made by Thomas, who retired on 26 January.

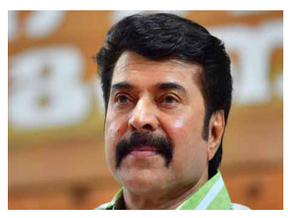
India has maintained that Canada has never shared any evidence or information to back its claim that Indian agents were involved in the killing of Nijjar.

During the interview, Thomas described the changing relationship between Ottawa and New Delhi as an "evolution" and said Canada has "made advancements in that relationship." *—PTI*

Why is Mammootty not given award: LOP

T'PURAM, 28 JAN

Leader of opposition in the Kerala assembly, VD Satheesan on Sunday alleged that talented personalities, including film star Mammootty, were neglected in the recent announcement of Padma awards.He wondered why they were yet to be bestowed with the top honours of the country.In a Facebook post, the Congress leader listed out the names of various iconic personalities belonging to different fields including eminent writers T Padmanabhan, MK Sanu, Sara Joseph, singer Sujatha Mohan, and others who still haven't been given the Padma awards.The value of an honour is enhanced when it reaches the most deserving hands, he said. There are several people who have upheld extraordinary excellence, sense of freedom, noble thoughts and democratic values in their respective fields but still failed to find their names on the list of Padma awards, he pointed out. Satheesan also questioned the neglect shown towards eminent poet Sreekumaran Thampi with regard to Padma Awards. *—PTI*



Mammootty PHOTO: PTI

MAJOR SHUFFLE: 75 J&K COPS GET NEW POSTINGS

JAMMU, 28 JAN

In a major reshuffle in the police department, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has transferred 75 officers, including 30 IPS officers.A director general rank officer, three Additional Director General of Police (ADGPs), nine Deputy Inspector Generals (DIGs), 62 Senior Superintendent of Police (SSPs) and Superintendent of Police (SPs) are among those transferred. According to an order issued by Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) Home Department, RK Goyal on Saturday night, new district police chiefs appointed in Ganderbal, Kupwara, Pulwama and other places *—PTI*

IN MANIPUR

Tribal organisation to 'oppose' India-Myanmar border fencing

IMPHAL, 28 JAN

A tribal organisation in Manipur's Churachandpur district said it will "oppose" the Centre's decision to fence the Indo-Myanmar border.

Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) held a public consultation in the district headquarters town on Saturday where it was resolved to "oppose" the Centre's decision to fence the Indo-Myanmar border and to cancel the Free Movement Regime, a statement issued by ITLF said.

The Free Movement Regime allows people living on both sides of the border to travel 16km into each other's territory without a visa. Four Indian states -- Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, share a 1,643-km-long border with Myanmar.

The statement said the ITLF also decided to approach the Mizoram government for the "political future of Kuki Zo people".

More than 31,000 people from Myanmar, mostly from the Chin state, have taken refuge in Mizoram following the military coup in the neighbouring country in February 2021. Many also took shelter in Manipur.Union Home Minister Amit Shah on 20 January said in Guwahati that the government will end the free movement of people at the India-Myanmar border, and fence it completely so that it can be protected like the country's boundary with Bangladesh. *—PTI*

Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) held a public consultation in the district headquarters town on Saturday Photo: PTI

Kaziranga records 2 new mammal species

GUWAHATI, 28 JAN

Two new mammalian species - Binturong or the bearcat and the small-clawed otter - have been recorded in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, taking the total mammalian species in the protected area to 37, an official said.

The two mammalian species were detected during the recent enumeration survey of water birds, park director Sonali Ghosh said.

The elusive Binturong (Arctictis binturong), also known as bearcat, is the largest civet in India and listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.It was detected and photographed by tour guide Chirantanu Saikia while participating in the bird census, Ghosh said.

An arboreal mammal native to South and Southeast India, it is not easily found due to its nocturnal and arboreal habits, she said.It is also uncommon in much of its range and is known to have a distribution exclusive to NE India, Ghosh added.The second sighting was that of the small clawed otter and its photograph was taken by Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Eastern Assam Wildlife Arun Vignesh. The otter was detected during a short training programme for officers and frontline staff jointly conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India in collaboration with the Assam Forest Department, she said.The small-clawed otter (Aonyx cinereus), also known as the Asian small-clawed otter, is the smallest otter species in the world. *—PTI*

UNEXPECTED TRAGEDY

Stage collapses at Delhi temple event; 1 dead, 17 injured

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

A 45-year-old woman died and 17 people were injured when a stage set up for a religious function at the Kalkaji temple here collapsed in the early hours of Sunday, police said.

The tragic incide nt occurred around 12.30am, they said. The identity of the deceased is yet to be identified.

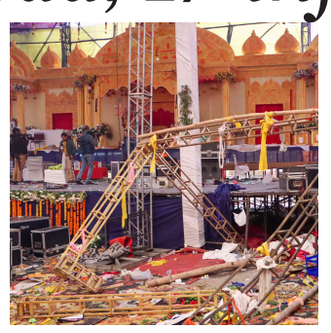
According to police, a 'jagran' (religious function) was organised at the Mahant Parishar of Kalkaji temple on Saturday and around 1,600 people attended it.Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal condoled the death of the woman and wished for the speedy recovery of the injured."The accident that happened last night during a 'jagran' at the Kalkaji temple is tragic. A woman has died, may her soul rest in peace. I wish for the speedy recovery of the 17 injured people," Kejriwal said in a post on 'X' in Hindi."I appeal to people of Delhi to take special care of safety standards in any kind of big event and make arrangements in such a way that no untoward incident happens," he added.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (southeast) Rajesh Deo said no prior permission had been granted for the event at the temple.

According to the police, an elevated wooden platform supported by an iron frame was set up near the main stage for the families of the organisers and VIPs.

Around 12.30 am, the elevated platform broke right from the middle as it could not bear the weight of the people sitting on it and collapsed, injuring those seated on it and close to it on the ground, the DCP said.

An eye-witness, Varun, said there was a large gathering at the temple as singer B Praak was present. "All of sudden, the stage collapsed and those who were sitting close to the stage received injuries. The singer had left by that time," he told PTI.All those injured in the stage collapse were rushed to the AIIMS Trauma Centre and the Safdarjung and MAX hospitals by police and the public."The fire brigade was called to the spot. Seventeen people were stated to have been injured. *—PTI*



A collapsed platform at Kalkaji Mandir, in New Delhi where singer B Praak was present on Sunday PHOTOS: PTI, INSTAGRAM

UNDER ATTACK

Environmental activists from Food Retaliation hurl soup at Leonardo Da Vinci's Mona Lisa at the Louvre Museum in Paris on Sunday. The Louvre said the work was behind protective glass and was not damaged
PHOTO: X/ THE IMPROBABLE DREAMER

Umar Khalid languishes in jail without bail or trial

Umar Khalid was charged with sedition for organising a protest at his alma mater, Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, over the 2013 hanging of a Kashmiri man
PHOTO: PTI

In an interview in January 2020, Umar Khalid introduced himself as an "unemployed 32-year-old Indian", with a doctorate on indigenous people from a prestigious university.

"It must come into practice in everyday life in a way you can voice your issues and concerns with democratic functioning."

Khalid had already gained prominence in 2016 as one of five Indian students charged with sedition for organising a protest at his alma mater, Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), over the 2013 hanging of a Kashmiri man.

He, along with another student, had surrendered to the police and had been granted bail months later. In 2022, the Supreme Court temporarily suspended the colonial sedition law, instructing the government to halt all trials until the law's validity was conclusively determined by the court.

Four years later, in September 2020, Khalid was arrested again and accused of being a "key conspirator" in violent clashes in Delhi that killed 53 people, mostly Muslims. The February riots in the Indian capital occurred amid massive months-long protests against a contentious citizenship law.

53 people died as rioters burnt shops and houses in north-east Delhi in February 2020

Since then the activist has been languishing in a maximum security prison in the city. Two police cases were lodged against Khalid. One case has been dropped, while in the other, he hasn't been charged in court yet, and the trial hasn't begun. Denied bail twice in the second case, he has faced prolonged incarceration as the police invoked the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA until the completion of trial.

In May last year, Khalid's lawyers sought bail from the Supreme Court. Despite 11 scheduled dates over the past eight months, the top court has not yet heard the bail petition.

Lawyers on both sides were occasionally absent; at other times, changes in the bench hearing the case prolonged the delay. Kapil Sibal, Khalid's lawyer, has told the court that he would need only "20 minutes" to show that the police did not have a case against his client. The next hearing is set for 24 January, with the judge insisting that the proceedings must commence on that day.

Under the UAPA, the activist has been charged by police with a "larger conspiracy" of terrorism, criminal conspiracy and engaging in unlawful activities, along with charges of rioting.

The police has described him as a "remote supervisor" and "mastermind" behind the riots, relying on what they said were statements made by unnamed witnesses, Khalid's membership of WhatsApp groups, phone calls made to him by other accused when the riots began and his presence at various demonstrations.

They also say that unnamed witnesses have told them Khalid supported the overthrow of the Narendra Modi government, making provocative speeches. While denying him bail, the Delhi high court also said that Khalid had called for a revolution, which may not "necessarily" be bloodless. Khalid has consistently denied making any provocative speeches or instigating violence.

Banojyotsna Lahiri, Khalid's partner, says she has received messages of solidarity from all over the world

The trial court and the Delhi high court, which have denied him bail, are not convinced; they believe the allegations against . Khalid are, on the face of it, true.

Legal commentators say the evidence produced against Khalid is "weak".

In October 2022, a former Supreme Court judge, three retired high court judges, and a former federal home secretary examined the UAPA case against Khalid as part of a larger report on the riots. They wrote that they found no substantiating evidence to warrant the imposition of terrorism charges.

Meanwhile, in prison, Khalid reads voraciously, writes applications for fellow prisoners, and watches cricket on the TV. He also writes diligently, aiming to craft a prison diary of sorts that has already piqued the interest of publishers.

Khalid's family is allowed a 20-minute video call each week, and his friends can have a half-hour physical visit at the prison.

The family is holding up: after years of editing an Urdu newspaper, his father launched a small political party, while his mother, who used to work as a doctor, now runs a boutique. In July 2022, they had a brief respite: Khalid was granted temporary bail for a week to attend his sister's wedding.

In his prison ward, where he's permitted to leave his cell during the day, Khalid shares space with convicted criminals, including murderers and those guilty of other heinous crimes.

"Why am I here among all these people?" he often asks Ms Lahiri during their meetings.

—BBC News

SALAR ساڈا بنگلورو

Writing by hand enriches brain connections

Researchers found that repeating the movement of hitting a key with the same finger was less stimulating for the brain
PHOTO: PIXABAY

- For the study, the researchers recorded the electrical activity of the brains of 36 university students, who were repeatedly prompted to either write or type a word that appeared on a screen. When writing, they used a digital pen to write in cursive directly on a touchscreen. When typing they used a single finger to press keys on a keyboard

Students learn more and remember better when taking handwritten notes than using a keyboard as brain connectivity patterns were found to be far more elaborate while writing than typing on a keyboard, a new research has found.

Researchers said the findings suggested that the precisely controlled hand movements when writing with a pen helped obtain visual and movement information that contributed extensively to the brain's connectivity patterns, known to be crucial for memory formation and learning.

"There is some evidence that students learn more and remember better when taking handwritten lecture notes, while using a computer with a keyboard may be more practical when writing a long text or essay," said Audrey van der Meer, a brain researcher at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and co-author of the study published in the journal Frontiers in Psychology.

For the study, the researchers recorded the electrical activity of the brains of 36 university students, who were repeatedly prompted to either write or type a word that appeared on a screen. When writing, they used a digital pen to write in cursive directly on a touchscreen. When typing they used a single finger to press keys on a keyboard.

The researchers found that the connectivity between different brain regions increased when participants wrote by hand, but not when they typed.

On the contrary, the researchers found that repeating the simple movement of hitting a key with the same finger was less stimulating for the brain.

"This also explains why children who have learned to write and read on a tablet, can have difficulty differentiating between letters that are mirror images of each other, such as 'b' and 'd'. They literally haven't felt with their bodies what it feels like to produce those letters," said van der Meer.

Even though the study participants used digital pens for handwriting, the researchers said the results are expected to be the same when using a real pen on paper.

"We have shown that the differences in brain activity are related to the careful forming of the letters when writing by hand while making more use of the senses," explained van der Meer.

The findings demonstrated the need to give students an opportunity to use pens, rather than having them type during class, they said.

Guidelines to ensure that students receive at least a minimum of handwriting instruction could be an adequate step, they said.

However, the team also cautioned that it was important to keep up with continuously developing technological advances, which they said included an awareness of which way of writing - handwriting or typing - was advantageous under what kind of circumstances.

—PTI

The researchers found that the connectivity between different brain regions increased when participants wrote by hand, but not when they typed
PHOTO: PIXABAY

LETTERS

Write to us at salar@salar.news

Moti Mahal: Curry houses in Delhi battle over butter chicken

The court case over the dish involves two competing families, each claiming a lineage with the Delhi's renowned Moti Mahal restaurant; Kundan Lal Jaggi and Kundan Lal Gujral
PHOTO: FREEPIK/ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Who invented butter chicken?

The velvety dish, made in a thick tomato-yoghurt gravy with rich notes of butter and mild spices, has inspired mystery novels, travelogues, and countless restaurant orders.

But the comforting curry that people from around the world turn to as a familiar favourite has now become the subject of a messy court battle.

A lawsuit over the dish's origins was filed in the Delhi High Court last week. The case involves two competing restaurants and families, each claiming a lineage with the city's renowned Moti Mahal restaurant founded in 1947, and each calling themselves the inventors of the popular dish.The lawsuit - brought by the family of Kundan Lal Gujral, one the original restaurant's founders - claims that Gujral created the curry and has sued rival chain Daryaganj of falsely taking credit for it.

Gujral family, which is seeking $240,000 (£188,968) in damages, has also alleged that Daryaganj has wrongly claimed it invented dal makhani, a lentil dish made with butter and cream.

There are countless versions of how butter chicken was invented, but all of them start with a man called Mokha Singh, feature three of his employees and involve at least three different restaurants located across the subcontinent.

The lore goes back to pre-Independent India and inside the dusty lanes of Peshawar (now in Pakistan), where a young Singh ran a popular restaurant called Moti Mahal, says chef and food writer Sadaf Hussain.

In 1947, when India was partitioned, Singh and several of his Hindu employees fled Peshawar and moved to the Indian capital. Soon they lost touch with each other.Until one day, when three of them - Kundan Lal Gujral, his cousin Kundan Lal Jaggi, and Thakur Das Mago - ran into Singh at a makeshift liquor joint, and convinced him to let them open a new Moti Mahal in Delhi.

It was at this small open-air diner, located on the crowded Daryaganj street in the old quarters of Delhi, that butter chicken was born, Hussain says.

The idea was born out of frugality, using leftover tikkas and mixing it in a thick tomato gravy and dollops of butter. But it did wonders.

Within a year, ministers and heads of state, including India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, had become regular customers at Moti Mahal. "Peace treaties were hammered out in the balcony. And M Maulana Azad... reportedly told the Shah of Iran that while in India he must make two visits - to the Taj Mahal and Moti Mahal," The New York Times wrote of Moti Mahal in 1984.The opening team of the Moti Mahal restaurant in 1947For a long time, Kundan Lal Gujral - whom the newspaper described as "a portly, florid" man with a "splendid moustache" - was credited for the booming success.But things changed after his death. In 1960, the Gujral family had to lease out Moti Mahal after facing financial difficulties. (The restaurant is now run by a different family)

A few years later, the Gujrals launched a separate chain - this time calling it Moti Mahal Deluxe - and returned to business, opening franchises across the city.But another setback awaited them in 2019, when the grandson of the second partner, Kundan Lal Jaggi, opened a rival chain of restaurants called Daryaganj, added the description "By the inventors of Butter Chicken and Dal Makhani", and trademarked it.The owners of Daryaganj argued that while Gujral was the face of the restaurant, Jaggi handled the kitchen and so the dishes, including butter chicken, were all his ideas.

The Gujrals, however, rejected this and claimed that Jaggi was a junior partner who did not play a major role in the making of the menu, and that butter chicken, in fact, was created by Gujral while he was still in Peshawar.

That's the battle currently playing out in court: the family is demanding that owners of Daryaganj be restrained from calling themselves the inventors of butter chicken. "You cannot take away somebody's legacy," Kundan Lal Gujral's grandson, who has filed the lawsuit, recently told Reuters news agency.

In recent years, chefs too have invoked intellectual property rights to defend their restaurants, their signature style and dishes, although it's still rare for a case to reach the courts.

But such disputes are usually commercial in nature and have little to do with customers, says food writer Vir Sanghvi. "People go to restaurants to eat dishes they like and don't really care who invented them decades ago."The court battle involves the legacy of two Moti Mahal founders - Kundan Lal Gujral (R) and Kundan Lal Jaggi (L)

He adds that sometimes, dishes become so popular that their inventors are forgotten. "Who created the first masala dosa? Some versions give the credit to the Woodlands restaurant chain. Others dispute this and nobody cares enough to dig deeper."According to lawyers, the court would have to rely on "circumstantial evidence" and testimonies of people who had the dish decades ago. But even then, how would the judges determine who made the first pot?

It is possible that one of the partners had a handwritten recipe which could help settle the issue, Sanghvi says. "So far this has not come to light."But the owners of Daryaganj know that even if they retract their claims about inventing the dish, it would make no difference to their business. And despite the success of Daryaganj, Moti Mahal would continue to flourish as well, Sanghvi adds.

"Either way, it is going to be hard to tell, so many decades later, what really went on in the kitchen."

—BBC News

PHOTO: AP

B'desh appeals court grants bail to Muhammad Yunus

DHAKA, 28 JAN

An appeals court in Bangladesh on Sunday granted bail to Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, who had been sentenced earlier to six months in prison for violating the country's labour laws. The court also agreed to hear an appeal against his sentencing. Yunus who pioneered the use of microcredit to help impoverished people, especially women, filed the appeal seeking bail on Sunday morning before it was granted. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in 2006. The 83-year-old economist and three other officials of the telecommunications company were sentenced to six months in prison on 1 January, but they were immediately granted 30 days of bail to appeal the verdict and sentence. *—AP*

4 people die in US murder suicide shooting

LOS ANGELES, 28 JAN

Four people are dead following what police in Los Angeles characterized as a murder-suicide in the Granada Hills area on Saturday. Officers responded shortly before 7 pm to a report of a shooting in the 11600 block of Lerdo Avenue and found four people who were pronounced dead at the scene. Investigators determined the shooting was a murder-suicide, the Los Angeles Police Department said. After receiving the call, there was no answer when the officers arrived and knocked at the door, police said. Police forced entry into the home and a survivor of the shooting directed them to three victims. *—AP*

Statue of basketball icon Jackie Robinson stolen

WASHIGNTON, 28 JAN

A statue of iconic American baseball player Jackie Robinson was stolen from a park in Kansas, police said. The bronze statue, which stood at a park in Wichita, was cut at the ankles and hauled off in a truck. "Our community is devastated," said Wichita Police in a statement on the theft, which happened overnight on Thursday. Police have offered a cash reward for any tip on the statue's whereabouts. Wichita police chief Joe Sullivan said at a news conference on Friday that he was "frustrated by the actions of those individuals who had the audacity to take the statute" from a park that children and families frequent. "This should upset all of us," Sullivan said. The statue was in McAdams Park, home to League 42, a youth baseball league named after Robinson's jersey number. *—BBC NEWS*

World's largest cruise ship sets sail from Miami

MIAMI, 28 JAN

The world's largest cruise ship has set sail from Miami, Florida, on its maiden voyage, but there are concerns about the vessel's methane emissions. The 365m-long (1,197 ft) Icon of the Seas has 20 decks and can house a maximum of 7,600 passengers. It is owned by Royal Caribbean Group. The vessel is going on a seven-day island-hopping voyage in the Caribbean. Environmentalists warn the liquefied natural gas (LNG)-powered ship will leak harmful methane into the air. Built at a shipyard in Turku, Finland, the Bahamas-registered ship has seven swimming pools and six water slides. It cost $2bn (£1.6bn) to build and also has more than 40 restaurants, bars and lounges. Although LNG burns more cleanly than traditional marine fuels such as fuel oil, there is a risk that some gas escapes, causing methane to leak into the atmosphere. *—BBC News*

North Korea fires multiple cruise missiles off east coast

The US, South Korea and Japan have responded to Pyongyang's tests

SEOUL, 28 JAN

North Korea has fired several cruise missiles off its east coast, South Korean military officials said, continuing a streak of weapons tests that have drawn condemnation from the United States, South Korea and Japan.

The missile launches follow North Korea's test launch on Wednesday of the strategic cruise missile "Pulhwasal-3-31", which Pyongyang has suggested is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said in a statement on Sunday that it detected several missiles over waters near the North Korean port of Sinpo, where Pyongyang operates a shipyard that manufactures naval assets including missile-firing submarines. "While strengthening surveillance and vigilance, our military is cooperating closely with the United States and monitoring additional signs and activities from North Korea," the JCS said. Pyongyang has ramped up weapons tests in recent weeks, including the launches of a purported "underwater nuclear weapon system" and a solid-fuelled hypersonic ballistic missile.

South Korea's military says North Korea fired several cruise missiles off its east coast *PHOTO: AP*

While North Korea is not banned from testing cruise missiles under UN sanctions, which prohibit more sophisticated ballistic technology, the launches are likely to inflame tensions in Pyongyang's already strained relations with Washington, Seoul and Tokyo. Despite international sanctions and censure, Kim has made major strides in advancing his country's illicit ballistic missile programme, which analysts say has been bolstered by cooperation with Russia. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un earlier this month said that South Korea was his country's "principal enemy" and that peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula was no longer possible.

- Despite international sanctions and censure, Kim has made major strides in advancing his country's illicit ballistic missile programme, which analysts say has been bolstered by cooperation with Russia

The US, South Korea and Japan have responded to Pyongyang's tests by carrying out expanded joint military exercises, which Kim has cast as rehearsals for an invasion. North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency on Sunday condemned the drills, vowing "merciless" consequences and warning that the country was "fully prepared for a deadly war". *—Al Jazeera*

HALT TO ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

US negotiators close in on hostage deal

People attend a demonstration demanding the release of the hostages taken by Hamas militants into the Gaza Strip *PHOTO: AP*

WASHIGNTON, 28 JAN

US negotiators are making progress on a potential agreement under which Israel would pause military operations against Hamas in Gaza for two months in exchange for the release of more than 100 hostages captured in the 7 October attack on Israel, according to two senior administration officials, Associated Press reports. The officials, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive discussions, said on Saturday that emerging terms of the yet-to-be sealed deal would play out over two phases. In the first phase, fighting would stop to allow for the remaining women, elderly and wounded hostages to be released by Hamas.

Israel and Hamas would then aim to work out details during the first 30 days of the pause for a second phase in which Israeli soldiers and civilian men would be released. The emerging deal also calls for Israel to allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza. The Guardian has not confirmed the terms of the potential agreement and Israel and Hamas have not commented on it.

The AP report continues: While the proposed deal would not end the war, US officials are hopeful that such an agreement could lay the groundwork for a durable resolution to the conflict. The New York Times first reported on Saturday that progress has been made towards an agreement for a pause in fighting in exchange for the remaining hostages.

The CIA director, Bill Burns, is expected to discuss the contours of the emerging agreement when he meets on Sunday in France with David Barnea, the head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, Qatar's prime minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, and Egypt's intelligence chief, Abbas Kamel, for talks centred on the hostage negotiations. *—Courtesy, The Guardian*

AMID HAMAS AID ROW

Palestinians walk by the rubble of a building after it was struck by an Israeli airstrike, in Gaza City *PHOTO: AP*

UN chief pleads for Palestinian relief funding

UNITED NATIONS, 28 JAN

The head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has urged the countries that halted funding to reconsider their "shocking" decision.

Over two million people in the Gaza Strip depend on it "for their sheer survival," Philippe Lazzarini said. Eight countries, including the UK, took the action after Israel told the agency some UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October deadly Hamas attacks on Israel. The agency says it is investigating and has already sacked those employees.

Israel has long accused different branches of the UN - including UNRWA - of bias and even of antisemitism. The countries that have now suspended funding UNRWA are Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK and the US.

Created in 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, is the biggest UN agency operating in Gaza. It provides healthcare, education and other humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Since Israel began its offensive in response to the Hamas attacks UNRWA has used its facilities across Gaza to shelter hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians.

Lazzarini said: "It is shocking to see a suspension of funds to the agency in reaction to allegations against a small group of staff, especially given the immediate action that UNRWA took by terminating their contracts and asking for a transparent independent investigation.*—BBC News*

Gunmen kill 9 Pak nationals in Iran after tit-for-tat attacks

TEHRAN, 28 JAN

Gunmen have killed nine Pakistanis in a restive southeastern border area of Iran, Pakistan has said, amid efforts by the two countries to mend ties after recent tit-for-tat attacks.

"Deeply shocked by horrifying killing of 9 Pakistanis in Saravan. Embassy will extend full support to bereaved families," the Pakistani ambassador to Tehran, Muhammad Mudassir Tipi, said on the social media platform X on Saturday. "We called upon Iran to extend full cooperation in the matter."

Earlier in the day, Iran's semi-official Mehr News Agency reported the attack in Saravan in Sistan-Baluchestan province. It identified the dead only as foreign nationals and said no individuals or groups had claimed responsibility for the shootings. The province's deputy governor, Alireza Marhamati, told official news agency IRNA that according to survivors of the incident, "three armed people shot at the foreigners after entering their residence and fled the scene". He confirmed the toll of nine deaths and said three others were wounded.

Mehr News Agency reported the attack in Saravan in Sistan-Baluchestan province *PHOTO: PTI*

- Mehr News Agency reported the dead only as foreign nationals and said no individuals or groups had claimed responsibility for the shootings

The Baluch rights group Haalvash said on its website that the victims were Pakistani labourers who lived at a car repair shop where they worked. Calling the attack a "terrorist incident", Pakistan's foreign ministry said it was in touch with Iranian authorities and had asked Tehran to investigate the incident.

"It is a horrifying and despicable incident and we condemn it unequivocally," Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said following the news. "We are in touch with Iranian authorities and have underscored the need to immediately investigate the incident and hold to account those involved in this heinous crime." *—Al Jazeera*

Commonwealth team to assess Pakistan poll

ISLAMABAD, 28 JAN

Ahead of general elections in Pakistan on 8 February, a 13-member Common wealth observer group (COG) led by former Nigerian President Dr Goodluck Jonathan will be deployed to offer an independent and comprehensive assessment of the country's electoral process.

The general elections in Pakistan will be held on 8 February, and there are approximately 128 million eligible voters. On election day, members of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) will observe and consider all aspects of the election process across Pakistan, from the opening of polling stations and the voting process to the counting of ballots and the announcement of results.

The observer team, which has been selected by the Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland, comprises multi-disciplinary experts from across the Commonwealth nations and would be chaired by former Nigeria president Jonathan. "A 13-member Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) is due to arrive in Islamabad on February 1 and will remain in the country until the electoral process is completed. The observer group will offer an independent and comprehensive assessment of the electoral process," a statement said. *—PTI*

Uncovered major arms corruption: Ukraine

KIYV, 28 JAN

Ukraine's security service says it has uncovered corruption in an arms purchase by the military worth about $40m (£31m).

The SBU said five senior people in the defence ministry and at an arms supplier were being investigated. It said the defence officials signed a contract for 1',00,000 mortar shells in August 2022. Payment was made in advance, with some funds transferred abroad, but no arms were ever provided.

Corruption has been a major stumbling block in Ukraine's bid to join the European Union. The SBU said an investigation had "exposed" officials of the ministry of defence and managers of arms supplier Lviv Arsenal, "who stole nearly 1.5 billion hryvnias in the purchase of shells".

"According to the investigation, former and current high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Defence and heads of affiliated companies are involved in the embezzlement," it said. The SBU said that despite the contract for the shells having being agreed six months after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, "not a single artillery shell" was ever sent.

- One of the suspects was detained while attempting to leave Ukraine and is currently in custody, the SBU said. Ukraine's prosecutor general says the stolen funds have been seized and will be returned to the defence budget

One of the suspects was detained while attempting to leave Ukraine and is currently in custody, the SBU said. Ukraine's prosecutor general says the stolen funds have been seized and will be returned to the defence budget.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cited the fight against corruption as one of his main priorities when he came to power in 2019. The latest allegations come as Republicans in the United States push back on President Joe Biden's efforts to send more aid to Ukraine.

—BBC News

Finland goes to polls to elect a new Prez

HELSINKI, 28 JAN

Voters in Finland were electing a new president on Sunday at an unprecedented time for the Nordic nation that is now a NATO member with its eastern border with Russia closed — two things almost unthinkable a few years ago.

Polls across the country opened at 9 am (0700 GMT) and will close at 8 pm (1800 GMT).

Unlike in most European countries, the president of Finland holds executive power in formulating foreign and security policy, particularly when dealing with countries outside the European Union like the United States, Russia and China.

Some 4.5 million citizens are eligible to vote for Finland's new head of state from an array of nine candidates — six men and three women. They are picking a successor to hugely popular President Sauli Niinisto, whose second six-year term expires in March. He is not eligible for re-election.

No candidate is expected get more than 50 per cent of the vote in Sunday's first round of voting, pushing the race into a runoff in February.

Stubb, who represents the conservative National Coalition Party and headed the Finnish government in 2014-2015, and veteran politician Haavisto, an ex-United Nations diplomat running for the post for the third time, are each estimated to garner 23 per cent-27 per cent of the votes.

A woman casts her ballot at a polling station during the presidential election, in Helsinki, Finland on Sunday *PHOTO: AP*

Finland's new head of state will start a six-year term in March in a markedly different geopolitical and security situation in Europe than did incumbent Niinisto after the 2018 election.

Abandoning decades of military non-alignment in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Finland became NATO's 31st member in April, much to the annoyance of President Vladimir Putin of Russia, which shares a 1,340-kilometer (832-mile) border with the Nordic nation. *—AP*

IMRAN KHAN PARTY ASKS EC TO SUSPEND SINDH GOVERNOR

ISLAMABAD, 28 JAN

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Saturday filed a complaint against Karachi province Mayor Murtaza Wahab and the Sindh governor and asked the poll conducting authority to "temporarily remove" them from their offices to ensure free, fair, and impartial elections, Dawn News reported.

This comes a day after the Election Commission of Pakistan issued a notice to Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab for violating its code of conduct. PTI Karachi President Khurrum Sher Zaman, accused the mayor. *—PTI*

BALLISTIC MISSILE CONCERNS

Iran launches 3 satellites into space

JERUSALEM, 28 JAN

Iran said on Sunday it successfully launched three satellites into space with a rocket that had multiple failures in the past, the latest for a programme that the West says improves Tehran's ballistic missiles.

The launch comes as heightened tensions grip the wider Middle East over Israel's continued war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip, sparking fears of a regional conflict.

While Iran has not intervened militarily in the conflict, it has faced increased pressure within its theocracy for action after a deadly Islamic State suicide bombing earlier this month and as proxy groups like Yemen's Houthi rebels conduct attacks linked to the war. Meanwhile, Western nations remain worried about Iran's rapidly expanding nuclear programme.

The launch comes as heightened tensions grip the wider Middle East over Israel's continued war on Hamas *PHOTO: ANI*

Footage released by Iranian state television showed a nighttime launch for the Simorgh rocket. An Associated Press analysis of the footage showed that it took place at the Imam Khomeini Spaceport in Iran's rural Semnan province. "The roar of the Simorgh (rocket) resonated in our country's sky and infinite space," said Abbas Rasooli, a state TV reporter, in the footage.

State TV named the launched satellites Mahda, Kayhan-2 and Hatef-1. It described the Mahda as a research satellite, while the Kayhan and the Hatef were nanosatellites focused on global positioning and communication respectively.

Iran's Information and Communications Technology Minister Isa Zarepour said the Mahda had already sent signals back to Earth. There have been five failed launches in a row for the Simorgh programme, another satellite-carrying rocket. The Simorgh, or "Phoenix", rocket failures have been part of a series of setbacks in recent years for Iran's civilian space programme, including fatal fires and a launchpad rocket explosion that drew the attention of former US President Donald Trump. *—AP*

Talwar, first Indian to head a global bank, passes away

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Veteran banker Rana Talwar, who was the first Indian to head a global bank -- Standard Chartered Plc, died at the age of 76 years.Talwar, son-in-law of DLF Group chairman emeritus K P Singh, breathed his last on Saturday, sources said. He is survived by his wife Renuka and son Rahul. Besides DLF, he served on the boards of various companies including Asahi India Glass Limited and Great Eastern Energy Corporation Limited.The company regrets to inform about the sad demise of Talwar, a non-executive director, on Saturday, January 27, 2024, which was intimated to the company by the family members, DLF said in a regulatory filing.During his stint at Citi Bank, Talwar, was responsible for building the US-based bank's retail businesses across Asia Pacific and the Middle East. *—PTI*

Tea Board to fund training for capacity building of STGs

KOLKATA, 28 JAN

Tea Board will fund capacity-building training for small tea growers (STGs) across the country whose production volumes exceed more than 50 per cent of overall produced annually.The Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Associations (CISTA) said that under the capacity building training programme, awareness on food safety, use of banned chemicals, use of pesticides and adoption of plant protection code (PPC) would also be discussed among the STGs.In Assam, the programme will be conducted in 13 places including Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Kokrajhar, four places in West Bengal, and two places in Tamil Nadu.In 2022, total tea production was around 1350 million kilogramme, out of which 52 per cent was contributed by the STGs. *—PTI*

$8 M raised for sustainable agriculture

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

Sustainable agriculture company Grow Indigo on Sunday said it has raised over USD 8 million (around Rs 67 crore) in a funding round with a cumulative capital raise of more than USD 23 million (around Rs 191 crore) to date. The round saw interest from investors globally including participation from Indigo Ag, Mahyco and individuals and the fund raised will be utilised for driving the future of sustainable agriculture, the company said in a statement. Grow India is a joint venture between Indigo Ag and Mahyco that was formed in 2018.The company operates a carbon farming platform for smallholder farmers in India that includes four carbon programs across 13 states and cumulatively aims to reduce or remove emissions by 20 MT of CO2 annually from agriculture.About 8,00,000 acres have already been enrolled in the company's programs."With sustainability at its core, we have now demonstrated adoption of biological inputs and carbon solutions at scale by farmers," Grow Indigo Executive Chairman Usha BarwaleZehr added. *—PTI*

Optimistic about overall growth prospect: Pidilite

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Rural and semi-urban markets are growing 1.5 times faster than the urban market for Pidilite Industries, helping it register a double-digit volume growth and it sees positive demand environment in the last quarter also, says its Managing Director Bharat Puri.The company achieved a double-digit volume growth in the first three-quarters of FY24 and Puri expects to continue the momentum with a broad-based growth across categories."We see a good demand environment, government spending on infrastructure, the housing sector and real estate is seeing an upsurge. So, overall we remain optimistic about the overall prospects of our sector," said Puri in a virtual media roundtable.*—PTI*

B'luru among top 7 cities on rising demand for bigger homes

In B'luru average flat size increased by 26% to 1,484 sqft in 2023

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Builders are constructing bigger homes to meet consumers' demand as the average size of flats rose 11 per cent last year across seven major cities, according to Anarock.Real estate consultant Anarock has analysed the fresh supply of housing units during 2023 across the primary residential market of seven major cities.

The data showed that average flat sizes in the top 7 cities rose to 1,300 square feet last year from 1,175 square feet in 2022.

The data showed that average flat sizes in the top 7 cities rose to 1,300 square feet last year from 1,175 square feet in 2022 *PHOTO: PTI*

In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Kolkata, the average size of apartments fell, but it grew in Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Chennai in 2023.

In Bengaluru, the average flat size increased by 26 per cent to 1,484 sqft in 2023 from 1,175 sqft in the previous year. The average flat size in Pune saw an 11 per cent increase to 1,086 sqft in 2023 from 980 sqft in 2022.

The supply of bigger luxury homes increased significantly last year, he said, adding that around 23 per cent of the total new launches were in the luxury category."The demand for bigger-size homes was kick-started by the pandemic, but there are no signs of it waning three years later.

Led by an enduring 'new normal' in homebuyer preferences, this demand seems eminently sustainable," Puri said.

Krisumi Corporation MD Mohit Jain said the aspirational segment of society is playing a pivotal role in propelling the demand for premium homes, which are spacious and bigger in size."

This trend may continue in the foreseeable future," he added .Among seven major cities, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Kolkata were the only two cities where the average flat sizes decreased in 2023. In MMR, the average flat size fell 5 per cent to 794 sqft in 2023 from 840 square feet in 2022.

Anarock said that developers in the Delhi-NCR are actively tracking demand and launching larger homes. The demand is skewed significantly towards luxury apartments, which are primarily defined by bigger sizes. Hyderabad has the highest average flat size at 2,300 square feet, up 30 per cent from 1,775 square feet in 2022.

Chennai saw a 5 per cent rise in average flat sizes to 1,260 square feet in 2023 from 1,200 sqft in the previous year, Anarock said. *—PTI*

FPIs take out ₹24.7cr from equities on rising bond yields

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have dumped Indian equities worth Rs 24,700 crore so far this month, owing to surging bond yield in the US.

On the other hand, they are bullish on the debt market and infused Rs 17,120 crore in the debt market during the period under review, data with the depositories showed.

According to the data, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) made a net investment of Rs 24,734 crore in Indian equities this month (till January 25).

Before this, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 66,134 crore in the entire December and Rs 9,000 crore in November.

FPIs started the new year with a cautious approach opting to book profits in the Indian equity markets as they touched all-time high levels.

Moreover, uncertainty over the interest rate scenario also prompted them to stay on the sidelines and wait for further cues, before taking investment decisions with respect to investing in emerging markets like India, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director-Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

FPIs made a net investment of Rs 18,302 crore in the debt market in December, Rs 14,860 crore in November, and Rs 6,381 crore in October, data showed.

In terms of sector, FPIs were sellers in auto & auto ancillary, media & entertainment and marginally in IT and they bought in oil and gas, power and selectively in financial services, Geojit's Vijayakumar said.

Overall, the total FPI flows for 2023 stood at Rs 1.71 lakh crore in equities and Rs 68,663 crore in the debt market.

Together, they infused Rs 2.4 lakh crore into the capital market. *—PTI*

Mcap of top 7 firms erode by ₹1.16 lakh cr

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded by Rs 1.16 lakh crore last week, with HDFC Bank emerging as the biggest laggard.

Of the top-10 most-valued firms, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), Hindustan Unilever, ITC, and State Bank of India were the laggards, ICICI Bank, Infosys and Bharti Airtel emerged as the gainers.

The market valuation of HDFC Bank fell by Rs 32,661.45 crore to Rs 10,90,001.31 crore.

The market valuation of TCS eroded by Rs 19,173.43 crore to Rs 13,93,439.94 crore and that of State Bank of India plunged by Rs 16,599.77 crore to Rs 5,46,989.47 crore.

ITC's valuation diminished by Rs 15,908.1 crore to Rs 5,68,262.28 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever declined by Rs 9,210.4 crore to Rs 5,70,974.17 crore.

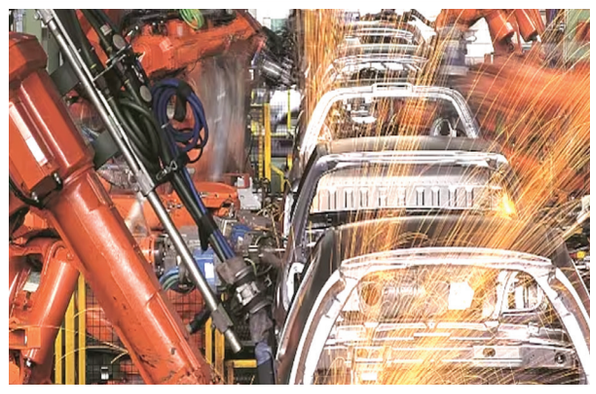
The market capitalisation of Reliance Industries dipped by Rs 1,928.22 crore to Rs 18,33,737.60 crore.

However, the mcap of Bharti Airtel jumped Rs 20,727.87 crore to Rs 6,52,407.83 crore.

Infosys added Rs 9,151.75 crore taking its valuation to Rs 6,93,457.65 crore, and the mcap of ICICI Bank climbed Rs 1,137.37 crore to Rs 7,08,511.16 crore.

In the ranking of the most-valued firms, Reliance Industries retained the number one position followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, LIC, Hindustan Unilever, ITC and State Bank of India. *—PTI*

INTERIM BUDGET



Automakers are confident towards shifting the economy and transportation sector to a greener future *PHOTO: PTI*

Auto cos seek push to green mobility, infra

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

Government needs to continue with favourable policies to promote green mobility while also focussing on infrastructure development at a robust pace in the upcoming Budget, according to some leading firms in the automobile space.

The Union government is all set to present the interim budget on 1 February.

"We expect capex on infrastructural projects to continue, aiding the automotive sector. The policy push for green mobility should remain a key focus for the government, encouraging faster adoption of electric vehicles," Mercedes-Benz India MD and CEO Santosh Iyer said.

The luxury car industry has a significant value contribution to the GDP and the segment aspires for a rationalised duty structure and GST on priority, he added.

"Overall, we expect consistency in various policies and no surprises in the upcoming budget," Iyer stated.

Luxury vehicles currently attract the top GST slab of 28 per cent with an additional cess of 20 per cent on sedans and 22 per cent on SUVs, taking the total tax incidence to up to 50 per cent.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor Deputy Managing Director (Corporate Planning, Finance & Administration and Manufacturing) Swapnesh R Maru said the automaker remains confident that the Government will continue its push towards shifting the economy and transportation sector to a greener future that is less dependent on fossil fuels.

"Looking ahead, policy stability and continued emphasis on spurring investment and infrastructure development will not only further enhance the country's global competitiveness but also lead to growth of the manufacturing and service sector," he added.

JK Tyre & Industries Chairman & Managing Director Raghupati Singhania said that consistent automotive policies would propel sectoral expansion.

"A robust budget is vital for India's journey to become the third-largest global economy," he noted.

Mahindra Last Mile Mobility MD & CEO Suman Mishra said that by driving inclusive income generation, electric three-wheelers and commercial vehicles pave the way for financial upliftment of many.

Kinetic Green Founder and CEO Sulajja Firodia Motwani expressed optimism that the government will continue to support EVs with the announcement of the FAME III scheme. *—PTI*

Natural gas demand to rise 6% in 2024: IEA

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

India's natural gas demand is expected to rise by 6 per cent in 2024 with a rise in consumption in fertiliser units, power generation and industrial sectors, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Following the 7 per cent year-on-year decline observed in 2022, India's primary gas supply rose by 5 per cent in 2023, with growth primarily driven by the petrochemical, power generation, refinery and industrial sectors.

"Natural gas demand in India is expected to increase by 6 per cent in 2024, mainly supported by higher gas use in industry (including in the fertiliser sector) and stronger gas burn in the power sector amid the development of its national pipeline grid and city gas infrastructure," IEA said Gas Market Report released last week.

India's natural gas demand had risen to 64 billion cubic meters in 2023.Liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports rose by 7 per cent on the year to 29 billion cubic meters last year, with import dependency at 44 per cent of the nation's natural gas consumption. Domestic production was up 6 per cent on the year to 35 billion cubic meters on the back of a rise in output from Reliance Industries' KG-D6 block.

IEA said India has approved a National Green Hydrogen Mission in January 2023. The mission sets a target for at least 5 million tonnes a year of green hydrogen production by 2030, "with potential to reach 10 million tonnes with growth of export markets". The initial outlay of the mission is around USD 2.4 billion. *—PTI*

Centre to discuss system of goods, tech on 30 January

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

Top central government officials, industry leaders and international experts will gather here on 30 January to deliberate on India's export control systems for sensitive goods and technologies and global best practices in the sector, an official said.

The official said that the 'National Conference on Strategic Trade Controls' seeks to showcase India's prowess in export control systems, facilitate a dialogue between government authorities and industry leaders on the sector, and address emerging risks associated with the export of sensitive goods and technologies.

There are specific laws and regulations with regard to strategic trade or export controls. These help manage the flow of dual-use goods, services and technologies across national borders.

These regulations focus on controlling export of SCOMET items in order to balance the country's commercial and security considerations.Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies (SCOMET) items are dual-use goods.

The conference would focus on issues like showcasing India's export control system; preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery systems by strengthening the export control system; and facilitating dialogue between the government authorities and industry stakeholders.

Besides, it aims at assessing and mitigating emerging risks associated with the export of sensitive technologies; increasing awareness and understanding of export controls; gathering feedback from the industry and learning best practices of other countries; and fostering international collaboration and showcase enforcement efforts, the official said.

India also maintains a harmonized list on export control of dual- use and military items, including software and technologies, having potential civilian/ industrial applications as well as military and WMD use. *—PTI*

431 infra projects show cost overrun of ₹4.82L cr

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

A total of 431 infrastructure projects in India, with investments of over Rs 150 crore each, experienced cost overruns of more than Rs 4.82 lakh crore in December 2023, according to a report by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. Out of 1,820 projects, 848 were delayed.

431 infra projects face cost overruns of Rs 4.82 lakh crAgencies

As many as 431 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, were hit by cost overrun of more than Rs 4.82 lakh crore in December 2023, an official report stated. According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), which monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,820 projects, 431 reported cost overrun and 848 projects were delayed.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,820 projects was Rs 25,87,066.08 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 30,69,595.88 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,82,529.80 crore (18.65 per cent of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for December 2023 said.Expenditure incurred on these projects till December 2023 is Rs 16,26,813.80 crore, which is 53 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.

Reasons for time overrun, include delay in land acquisition, lack of infrastructure support. *—PTI*

ASSETS WORTH $207.8 B

Arnault overtakes Musk as richest person in the world

NEW JERSEY, 28 JAN

Bernard Arnault, the billionaire Chairman and CEO of global luxury goods company LVMH—the entity behind dozens of luxury goods brands like Louis Vuitton and Sephora—is now the richest man in the world, passing Elon Musk.

Arnault and his family's net worth grew to $207.8 billion after a $23.6 billion increase on Friday, passing Musk's $204.5 billion, according to the Forbes real-time billionaires list.

The news comes as Musk's Tesla struggled in the stock market Thursday, dropping 13%, with Musk losing more than $18 billion in net worth.

Bernard Arnault and Elon Musk *PHOTO: X*

Meanwhile, LVMH shares were soaring Friday, up over 13% as of 11 a.m. on the heels of news of strong sales.

The market cap of LVMH reached $388.8 billion on Friday, compared to Tesla's $586.14 billion market cap.

In 2021, LVMH acquired Tiffany & Co. for nearly $16 billion—considered the largest luxury brand acquisition ever. Arnault's holding company Agache backs a venture capital firm called Aglaé Ventures, which Forbes reports invests in businesses like Netflix and ByteDance—the parent company of TikTok.

Arnault has five children who all work at LVMH. He recently appointed two of his sons to the LVMH board alongside two other children who were already on the board in a move to secure long-term family control. *—Forbes*

Flipkart co-founder Binny Bansal quits

NEW DELHI, 28 JAN

E-commerce major Flipkart co-founder Binny Bansal has resigned from the company's board, according to a company statement.

The development comes after around six months of Bansal selling an entire stake in the company.

"I am proud of the Flipkart Group's achievements over the past 16 years. Flipkart is in a robust position, with a strong leadership team and a clear path forward, and with this confidence, I have decided to step aside, knowing the company is in capable hands.

I wish the team the best as they continue to transform experiences for customers, and I remain a strong supporter of the business," Bansal said.

He co-founded the e-commerce firm with Sachin Bansal in 2007.

Sachin Bansal stepped down from the Flipkart board in 2018 after Walmart acquired a 77% stake in the company at a valuation of $21 billion.

Besides being an active angel investor, Binny Bansal has also started his own firm to provide marketing support to sellers on e-commerce platforms.

The valuation of Flipkart has increased to around $38 billion. The firm, however, still continues to run in losses.

The company posted a 9.4% increase in consolidated net total income to Rs 56,012.8 crore in financial year 2023 against Rs 51,176 crore in FY 2022. *—PTI*

State revenue grows 5% till Nov against 17.4%

MUMBAI, 28 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

The growth rate of the combined revenue receipts of the 16 largest states has fallen by almost 80 per cent to 5 per cent during April-November from the budgeted 17.4 per cent for the current fiscal, according to a report.The states have so far borrowed over 37 per cent more than they did last fiscal and given these poor numbers, they will have to borrow heavily this fiscal to service their debt and pay salaries and pensions.The plunge is due to a contraction in sales tax and lower-than-budgeted growth of state goods and services tax collections (SGST), excise duty and stamps and registrations during the period, restricting the growth of states own tax revenue (SOTR) to 11 per cent. Another reason for the poor numbers is the steep decline in Central grants,Icra Ratings said in a report.The agency, though, expects an upside in tax devolution in the fourth quarter, its quantum may not be adequate to fully offset the shortfall in grants.In the first eight months of FY24, the combined SGST, excise duty, stamp duty and registration fee collections of these sample 16 states expanded by 10-12 per cent. *—PTI*

PHOTO: AP

Hsieh and Mertens win AO women's doubles title

MELBOURNE, 28 JAN

Hsieh Su-wei and Elise Mertens padded their exceptional Grand Slam title records at the 2024 Australian Open on Sunday, winning the women's doubles title with a 6-1, 7-5 victory over Lyudmyla Kichenok and Jelena Ostapenko.On Rod Laver Arena, No.2 seeds Hsieh and Mertens took 1 hour and 33 minutes to prevail over 11th-seeded Kichenok and Ostapenko, who were contesting their first Grand Slam final in women's doubles."These are the stages you want to win," Mertens said in the champions' press conference. "As long as we still enjoy it and still get that motivation and everything, I think it's just very important. ... Of course it's a bit nerve-racking. You know, these matches are what you play for."Sunday marks Hsieh's seventh Grand Slam title.—*AP*

PHOTO: AP

India lose to Netherlands, finish runners-up

MUSCAT, 28 JAN

India lost 2-7 to the Netherlands in the final to finish runners-up at the FIH Hockey5s Women s World Cup here.Jyoti Chhatri (20th minute) and Rutuja Dadaso Pisal (23rd) scored for India in the summit clash on Saturday. Janneke van de Venne (2nd 14th) Bente van der Veldt (4th 8th) and Lana Kalse (11th 27th) struck a brace each for the Netherlands while Sosha Benninga (13th) was the other goal-getter. For their exemplary performance in the FIH Hockey5s Women's World Cup Hockey India has announced a cash award of Rs 3 lakh for each player and Rs 1.5 lakh each for the support staff. Both the teams probed for their chances after the start and it wasn t long before the Netherlands found an opening.Janneke van de Venne took a long-range shot which deflected off the Indian goalkeeper.—*AP*

Int'l kayaking tournament from 5 to 10 Feb

TAWANG, 28 JAN

A six-day international kayaking tournament will be organized next month near India's border with China in Arunachal Pradesh on the fast-flowing Tawangchu River in which two rivers from Tibet converge before it flows through Tibet to finally reach the Brahmaputra.Beginning 5 February the Tawangchu Tides tournament will see participants experience heart-pounding thrills as they navigate the river's Class V rapids according to a statement issued by the organisers.—*AP*

Barcelona loses thriller with Villarreal

LONDON, 28 JAN

Barcelona again showed it is not a championship-caliber team when it conceded twice in stoppage time to lose a 5-3 thriller with Villarreal in front of its stunned fans on Saturday.In one of the wildest games of the season, Villarreal was up 2-0, then Barcelona roared back with three goals in 12 minutes to lead 3-2 in the 72nd minute.But Barcelona's defense again let it down and new Villarreal arrival Goncalo Guedes leveled on a counterattack in the 84th. Striker Alexander Sorloth, who also set up two goals, then found the winner in stoppage time and José Morales added to Barcelona's misery.—*AP*

Sinner, winner: Italian takes first major at AO 2024

Soccer-mad Italy is now obsessed with tennis player

MELBOURNE, 28 JAN

Soccer-mad Italy has a new obsession. Jannik Sinner's performance on the tennis court has captured the country's attention.

And not just for the way Sinner rallied from two sets down to beat Daniil Medvedev and win the Australian Open title on Sunday.

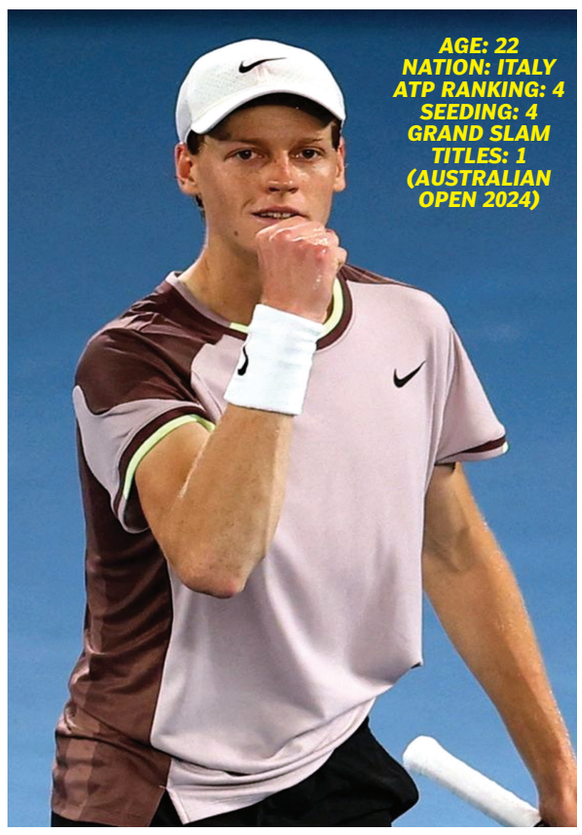
As Jannik Sinner trailed by two sets in his first-ever grand slam final, his hopes of attaining the ultimate dream seemed increasingly remote. He looked completely lost. Between points, he shared long, searching looks with his team. At one point, he even told them that he was "dead". Sinner's inexperience sharply contrasted with the nous of Daniil Medvedev, who seemed to know exactly what to do.

But Sinner dug far deeper than ever before, and somehow he gradually managed to turn his fortunes around. From staring down the prospect of likely defeat, Sinner, the fourth seed, pulled off the greatest comeback of his life to topple the third seed 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3, and win his first grand slam title at Australian Open.

With his astounding victory, Sinner is just the third Italian man to win a grand slam title. At 22 years and 165 days, he is also the youngest man to win the Australian Open since Novak Djokovic in 2008 and the second man born in the 2000s to win a grand slam title after Carlos Alcaraz. It is a reflection of the dominance of the Big Three for so long and how they have snuffed out the dreams of an entire generation that there are also only two men born in the 1990s with a grand slam title.

Medvedev is one of those two players, but his pursuit of a second grand slam title has proven excruciating. This time, an incredible tournament ends in total catastrophe. After recovering from numerous deficits of his own and pushing himself to the limit, he just could not close it out. Having led Rafael Nadal by two sets in the very same stadium in the 2022 final, this is the second time he has failed to close out an Australian Open title. Medvedev is now 1-5 in Grand Slam finals.

—*AP*

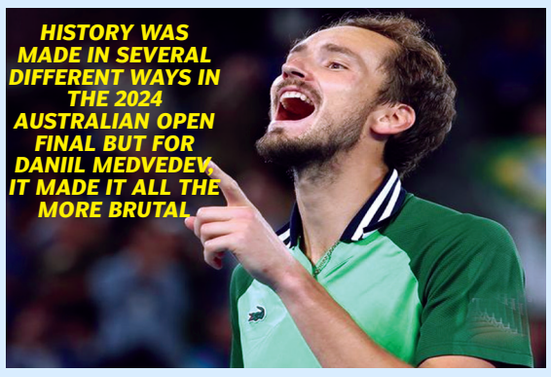


AGE: 22
NATION: ITALY
ATP RANKING: 4
SEEDING: 4
GRAND SLAM TITLES: 1 (AUSTRALIAN OPEN 2024)

Jannik Sinner became the youngest man to win the Australian Open since Novak Djokovic in 2008 **PHOTO: AP**

Medvedev philosophical about another GS final loss

Daniil Medvedev was philosophical about his loss to Jannik Sinner in Sunday's Australian Open final, rationalizing that at least he had made it to the title decider and not crashed out in an earlier round.The 27-year-old Russian had hoped it would be third time lucky on Rod Laver Arena on Sunday, having lost the 2021 and 2022 finals at Melbourne Park to Novak Djokovic and Rafa Nadal.The third seed took the first two sets with some brilliantly aggressive tennis only for the 22-year-old Italian to rally for a 3-6 3-6 6-4 6-4 6-3 victory and claim his first Grand Slam title."It's very, very tough when you have a mentality, I don't want to say champion, but a good mentality, a sports mentality, it's very tough to lose in the final," he said."It kind of hurts more maybe than to lose in semis or quarters. But you have to try to find positives, and the positive is, well, the final is better than the semi-final and quarters."The 2021 U.S. Open champion has now lost five of the six Grand Slam finals he has played, three of them after leading by two sets. — *Reuters*



HISTORY WAS MADE IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT WAYS IN THE 2024 AUSTRALIAN OPEN FINAL BUT FOR DANIIL MEDVEDEV, IT MADE IT ALL THE MORE BRUTAL

Daniil Medvedev **PHOTO: AP**

Shamar Joseph braved a toe injury and grabbed 7-68 as the young fast bowler **PHOTO: AP**

Joseph takes 7 to bowl WI to magical win

BRISBANE, 26 JAN

Shamar Joseph braved a toe injury and grabbed 7-68 as the young fast bowler inspired the West Indies to its first win in Australia in 27 years in a gripping conclusion to the day-night test at the Gabba on Sunday.

Joseph, who hobbled off the field late Saturday evening when he was struck by a searing Mitchell Starc yorker from the final ball of West Indies' second innings, flattened Australia for 207 to give the West Indies a memorable win by eight runs.

Opening batter Steve Smith was left stranded with an unbeaten 91 off 146 balls as Joseph kept coming hard at the Australian batters with his pace.

"Shout out to my teammates for their support," Joseph told broadcasters soon after masterminding West Indies' memorable win. "I wasn't even going to come to the ground today, but the doctor did something to my toe." The 24-year-old Joseph, who made his test debut at Adelaide where the West Indies lost by 10 wickets inside three days, sprinted towards the boundary in joy as he clean bowled No. 11 Josh Hazlewood and leveled the two-match series 1-1.

"I just stuck to the basics," Joseph said. "I feel like we win the entire series by winning this test ... I cried for my five-wicket haul but I'm so happy now. I'm not even tired. I would have kept bowling." West Indies had not beaten Australia in a test match since it won by 10 wickets at WACA in 1997, and Cameron Green and Smith well negotiated the first hour after they resumed the 216-run chase at 60-2 and raised Australia's hopes of finishing the home test summer 5-0 after it routed Pakistan 3-0 and also won the first test against the West Indies in dominant style. But Joseph returned with a stunning spell of fast bowling to breathe life when he grabbed 6-60 off an unchanged ten overs. West Indies 311 and 193 beat Australia 289 for 9 dec and 207 (Smith 91*, Green 42, S Joseph 7-68) by 8 runs.—*AP*

1st Test: Hartley hurts India on debut in a memorable 28-run win

HYDERABAD, 28 JAN

The pushback started by incandescent Ollie Pope was given its perfect conclusion by debutant left-arm spinner Tom Hartley whose soul-ripping spell fashioned England's memorable 28-run win over India on the fourth day of the first Test here on Sunday.

India's chase of 231 went south once Hartley (7/62) spun into India's top-order igniting a rot that saw India getting bowled out for 202 in the final over of the day. England now leads the five-match series 1-0. This is India's fourth defeat in home Tests since 2013 and the first ever in Hyderabad (across two venues in the city).

The spin twins have never been lethal on surfaces that aren't exactly Dustbowl and England's innings batting show won t do their reputation any good. With a lead of 190 we were in control but exceptional batting - probably one of the best I've seen in Indian conditions well played Ollie Pope. I thought 230 was gettable but it was t to be. India skipper Rohit Sharma said after the match.

The Indian cricket team slumped to the fifth position in the World Test Championship (WTC) points table after losing to England in the first Test match in Hyderabad on Sunday. Following the loss, India has just two wins from their five matches in the WTC and a PCT of 43.33. That puts them behind the likes of South Africa, New Zealand and Bangladesh. Australia tops the list with a PCT of 55 despite losing the second Test against West Indies in Gabba.

England 246 (Stokes 70, Bairstow 37, Ashwin 3-68, Jadeja 3-88) and 420 (Pope 196, Duckett 47, Bumrah 4-41, Ashwin 3-126) beat India 436 (Jadeja 87, Rahul 86, Jaiswal 80) and 202 (Rohit 39, Hartley 7-62) by 28 runs. —*PTI*

Tom Hartley whose soul-ripping spell fashioned England's memorable 28-run win over India **PHOTO: PTI**

PLAYER OF THE MATCH
Ollie Pope England 196
PHOTO: PTI

India needs to counter 'Bazball': Rahul Dravid

Ollie Pope embodied England's 'Bazball' making a 196 filled with sweeps, reverse sweeps and reverse scoops during the first Test, and India head coach Rahul Dravid admitted they will have to counter the unorthodox approach to making a comeback into the series.Pope's second inning 196 was central to the Three Lions' unforgettable 28-run win over India in the Hyderabad match after conceding a big 190-run lead.India had only lost once after taking advantage of this size, and it came against Sri Lanka at Galle in 2015 where they went ahead by 192 runs. "We'll have to counter that (Bazball). I certainly haven't seen it being done that (playing sweeps, reverse sweeps) consistently against that quality of bowlers.

East Bengal crowned champions of SC

BHUBANESWAR, 28 JAN

Kolkata heavyweights East Bengal were on Sunday crowned champions of the Super Cup after emerging 3-2 winner in a thrilling final against Odisha FC with Cleiton Silva scoring the decisive goal here.

Despite both sides having multiple chances to score neither could convert as the match ended 2-2 after regulation time and also after the end of the first half of extra-time.

Brazilian recruit Cleiton struck the winner for East Bengal in the 111th minute of the match leaving his team in a state of frenzy and the opponents shocked. Cleiton capitalized on a mistake from the Odisha FC goalkeeper and came up with a neat finish at a crucial juncture of the match slotting the ball into the bottom-right corner with a left-footed shot.

Odisha FC tried desperately for an equaliser in the remaining minutes but the East Bengal defence was up to the task of marking their opponents. East Bengal deserved credit for how they went about their task after they lost Shouvik following a second yellow card of the night. Odisha though also had been playing with 10 men from the 69th minute after Mourtada Fall was given the marching order following his second offence of the night.

The victorious East Bengal team will be nominated to play in the prestigious Asian Champions League 2 preliminary stage of the AFC 2023-24 season.

Trailing by a goal Odisha FC equalised when Jahouh stepped up to take a penalty and converted it from the spot in the 98th minute. Earlier a penalty from Saul Crespo helped East Bengal take the lead in the 62nd minute. In the 52nd minute, an excellent through pass from Mahesh led to a fine goal by Nandhakumar Sekar as East Bengal made it 1-1 in the second half. —*PTI*

Kolkata heavyweights East Bengal were on Sunday crowned champions of the Super Cup **PHOTO: PTI**

Kiran George **PHOTO: PTI**

B'luru Bulls claim thrilling tie against Jaipur

BENGALURU, 28 JAN

Bengaluru Bulls produced a sensational comeback to level the scores in the very last raid of the match and secured a 28-28 tie with Jaipur Pink Panthers in their Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 match at the Patliputra Indoor Stadium in Patna on Sunday. Bengaluru Bulls' Ran Singh and Monu were the star players of the game with 5 tackle points each. Though Jaipur Pink Panthers did not seal the win, they achieved a slice of history as they extended their unbeaten run to a record 12 games.

Jaipur Pink Panthers made a brisk start and had their opponents in a precarious position with just three men on the mat. Any other team would have wilted under pressure, but Bengaluru Bulls pulled off a defensive masterclass to stay alive. They produced four stunning Super Tackles two each from Ran Singh and Monu - to not only fight off the All-Out but also take a healthy lead at 15-10 in the 18th minute. The defending champions faltered in their raiding and Arjun Deshwal had just 1 raid point to his name. —*PTI*

HANDBALL ROW

Newcastle have to address off-field issues after Fulham win

LONDON, 28 JAN

Marco Silva clashed with journalists at his post-game press conference at Craven Cottage over a row about the decision to allow Newcastle United's opening goal.

WITH an FA Cup fifth-round tie to look forward to, Newcastle United's season is far from over. The key question now, though, is which players will still be around to see it to its duration.

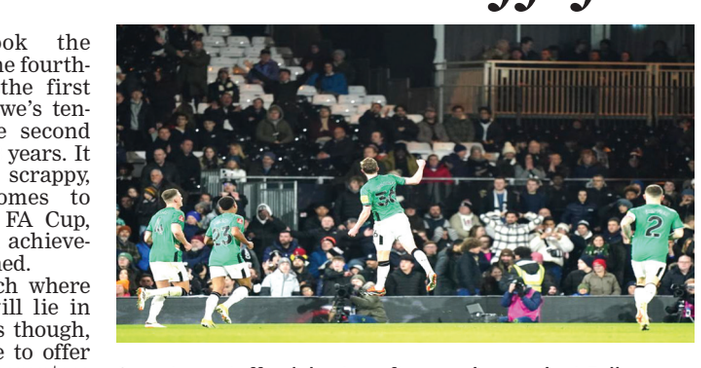
On the pitch, Saturday's 2-0 win over Fulham represented a welcome fillip after a testing spell in the league and took the Magpies beyond the fourth-round stage for the first time in Eddie Howe's tenure and only the second time in the last 18 years. It might have been scrappy, but when it comes to Newcastle in the FA Cup, any victory is an achievement to be cherished.

It is off the pitch where the main focus will lie in the next four days though, with Howe unable to offer any post-match guarantees over the fate of his players ahead of Thursday night's transfer deadline. Miguel Almiron and Jamaal Lascelles missed Saturday's game because of illness and injury respectively, but with intense speculation over their future refusing to go away – Almiron is the subject of interest from Saudi Arabia while Lascelles is firmly in the sights of Turkish side Besiktas – there is still the possibility that one or both might already have played their final game for the club.

The same could be true of Callum Wilson and Joelinton, meaning that the squad that has done so much to transform Newcastle's standing in the last couple of seasons could be broken up before it has had the opportunity to realize its full potential. While the Newcastle hierarchy has decided to sail so close to the wind about FFP limits that has created the necessity to sell to invest, that would still be a huge shame.

"I think the squad fulfilled its potential last year, but of course this year has been different," said Howe, who is still without ten senior players because of injury, illness, or suspension. "Last year, we overachieved massively I think, and that's credit to the players for that, not credit to myself.

"This year has been very difficult for us. We've had situations you could never have foreseen at the start of the season. I think we've been very unlucky at times – we've not been able to put our best team out onto the pitch and we've not been able to change things in the game either. —*AP*



Sean Longstaff celebrates after scoring against Fulham **PHOTO: AP**

- Marco Silva clashed with journalists at his post-game press conference at Craven Cottage over a row about the decision to allow Newcastle United's opening goal.